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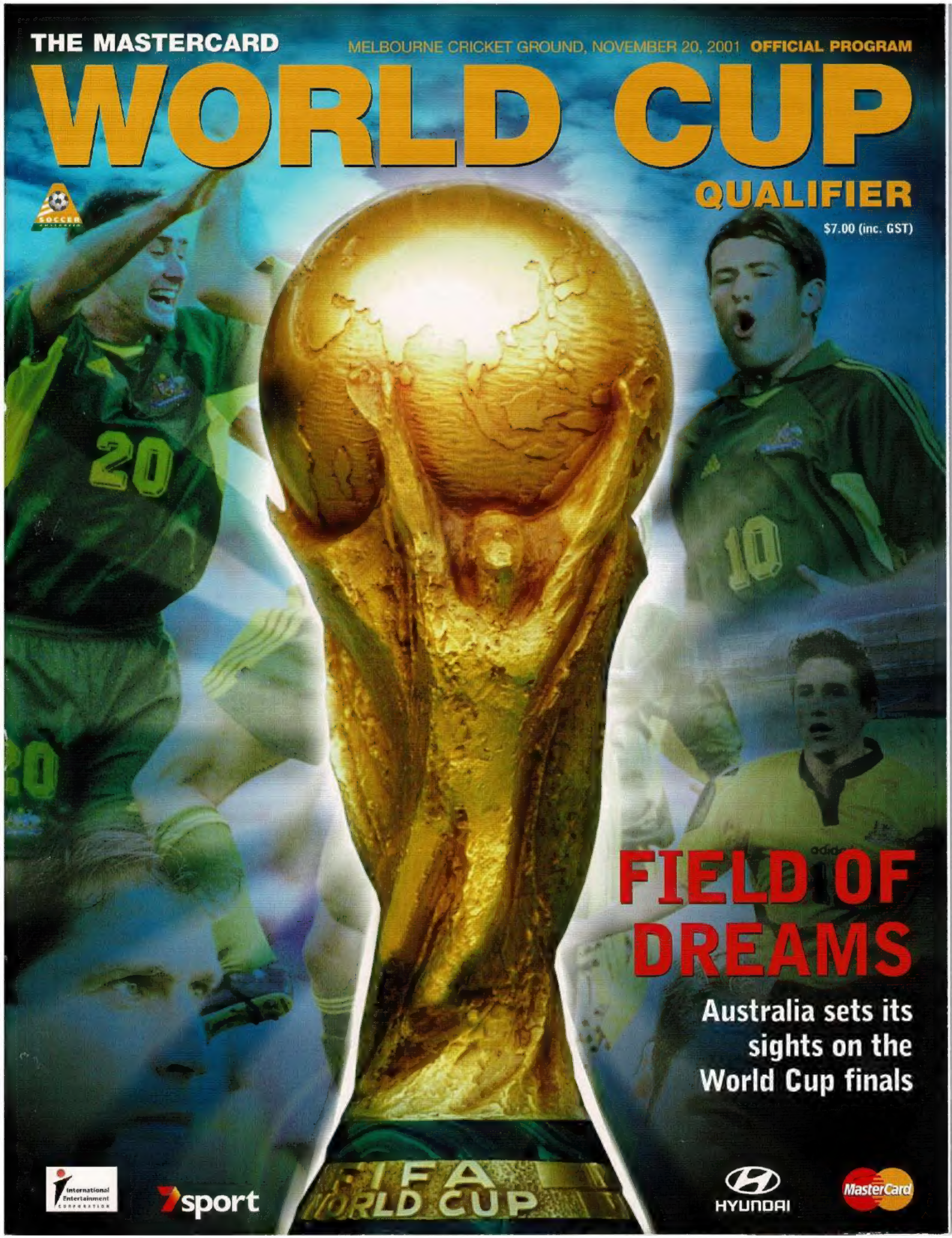

FIELD OF DREAMS

Australia sets its sights on the World Cup finals

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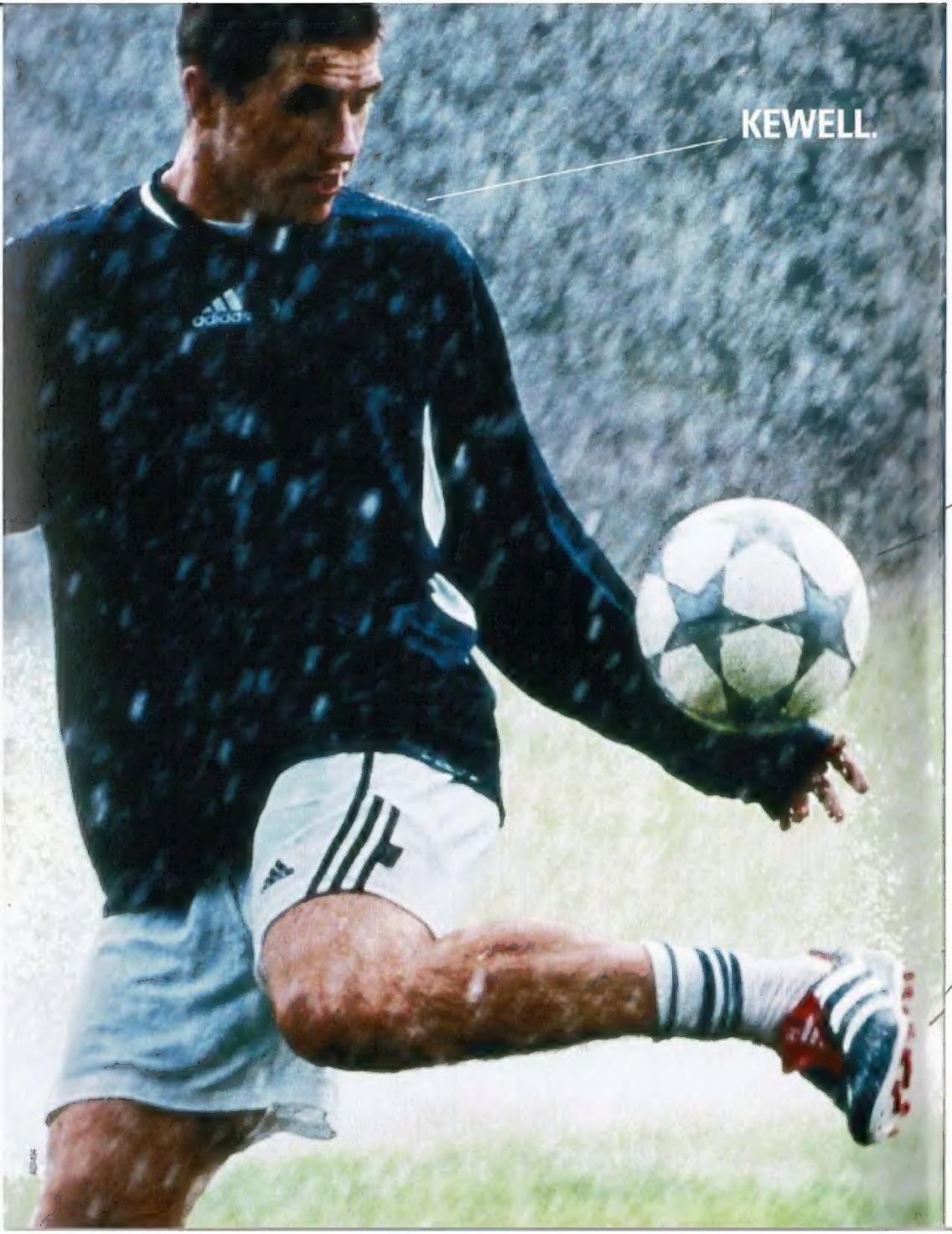

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PREMIER'S MESSAGE

WELCOME TO THE 2001 WORLD CUP SOCCER QUALIFIER AT THE Melbourne Cricket Ground.

This event will see the Hyundai Socceroos and their South American opponents contest the honour of participating in the 2002 World Cup in Japan and Korea.

The Socceroos have reached this stage by winning the Oceania competition with a comprehensive win over New Zealand in July. The spectacular results of the Australian team over the last six months have demonstrated that this Australian squad has the ability and depth to take us all the way to next year's World Cup. All Australians should be proud of these players who have shown great skill and commitment to Australia in this qualifying series.

The World Cup Qualifier will not only showcase world class soccer action, but will also offer a chance for Australian soccer fans to experience the attractions of Melbourne and regional Victoria. Acknowledged as Australia's "Events Capital". Melbourne has something for everyone, including magnificent architecture, interesting galleries and quality restaurants. Within a few hours drive of Melbourne you will discover the joys of the Yarra Valley and Mornington Peninsula wineries, breathtaking scenery along the world-renowned Surf Coast, Phillip Island's penguin colonies and world-class beaches.

I wish all visitors, residents and competing teams an enjoyable and memorable event, and look forward to welcoming you back to experience the attractions and many other magnificent events conducted in Victoria.

Steve Bracks.

Steve Bracks
Premier of the State of Victoria

OFC

ON BEHALF OF THE OFC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE and all member countries, I would like to welcome our friends from South America for this crucial playoff with Australia. At stake is a place at the 2002 FIFA World Cup in Korea/Japan, a tournament which Australia has not participated in since 1974 nor a team from Oceania since 1982.

Qualification of a team from Oceania to the 2002 World Cup will greatly enhance the development of football in our region as well as reinforcing what is already a strong argument that Oceania, as a FIFA Confederation, deserves to have its champion directly qualify for future World Cup tournaments.

The OFC would like to express its appreciation for tonight's match to the sponsors who have chosen the "world game" as a medium to promote their products and services. We also thank the fans who take the time, money and effort to come what we expect will be a great spectacle. We are indebted for their support and long may it continue.

Finally, it is acknowledged that a lot of preparation has gone into ensuring that the two teams have reached this stage. Australia has had to overcome a qualifying tournament involving five Oceania teams before taking on a tough New Zealand side home and away to reach this stage. Our visitors from South America have had to participate in the COMNEBOL qualifying series, which is regarded as one of the more difficult qualifying series in the world.

But both teams through their respective successes deserve to be here and on behalf of the OFC Executive Committee, I wish the Australian and South American delegations and players the very best of luck in their quest to qualify for the 2002 FIFA World Cup in Korea/Japan.

Basil Scarsella
OFC President

CONMEBOL

THE QUALIFICATION PROCESS FOR PARTICIPATION in the final competition of the World Cup 2002 dictates that representatives of the South American and Oceania Confederations play each other over a two-legged series. This is sure to display the high level of quality and respect for Fair Play that will be found next year in the World Cup Finals.

Throughout the difficult process of qualifying, our sport will be put under scrutiny by the world as two different schools of football display the quality, beauty and undeniable prestige that are inherent in representing Oceania and South America in this series.

These matches will showcase two footballing continents of differing, yet similar, cultures and abilities; uniting their desires and efforts to earn national, continental and world acclaim.

It is our wish that these qualifying matches, both in Melbourne and South America, produce great football founded on the principles of Fair Play.

We are sure that during such a crucial time in the world, that not only will football be the obvious winner, but that the matches between these two similarly expectant and hopeful continents, will stand as a symbol of peace and solidarity amongst our fellow human beings.

Nicolas Leoz
President Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol

SOCCER AUSTRALIA

I WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME ALL THE SUPPORTERS to tonight's important match between Australia and our visitors from South America.

The 2002 FIFA World Cup in Korea and Japan is just six months away and the Australian World Cup team, under the guidance of coach Frank Farina, is entering the final phase of the qualification process.

Much progress has been made at local and national levels in Australian soccer and without doubt, the Hyundai Socceroos have embarked on their most important World Cup campaign since 1974.

The standard and recognition of Australian soccer has improved dramatically over the last decade, even since our last World Cup campaign. The very fact that superstars like Harry Kewell, Mark Viduka, Paul Okon and Brett Emerton – and that's just to name a few – are enjoying major success with European and English-based sides is an indication of the ever-improving international recognition Australian soccer receives.

All in all, there is nothing quite like the World Cup. Qualifying for Korea/Japan 2002 would not only give the Hyundai Socceroos World Cup squad unprecedented international exposure, but also further establish Australia as a major developing force in the world game.

I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all our corporate partners who support the Hyundai Socceroos, and thank you for your continued support of the code in Australia.

Finally, thank you to all sports fans for their support, and I urge all Australians to get behind the Hyundai Socceroos in their quest to walk on the world soccer stage at the 2002 World Cup.

Ian Knop
Chairman – Soccer Australia

HYUNDAI

WELCOME SOCCER FANS TO THIS MOST EXCITING time in Australian and world soccer.

The Socceroos – now the Hyundai Socceroos – are now at the critical point in qualifying for the World Cup.

This qualifier match is part of that exciting and suspenseful program and as the team's new sponsor during this time, we at Hyundai Motor join you in wishing the team a successful, victorious campaign.

Who is Hyundai and why are we involved ?

In Australia, Hyundai is the long-time leading import car brand, with an ever-broadening range of cars and lifestyle off-road vehicles. We are no strangers to support for soccer here, having sponsored the Brisbane Strikers for the last few years.

Globally, the 2002 World Cup is jointly hosted by Korea and Japan and as Korea's major automotive manufacturer and exporter, Hyundai Motor Co is the official vehicle supplier to the World Cup and a major sponsor of the competition.

Soccer is the world's most popular sport, a passion for the people. Similarly, Hyundai's range of quality cars is accessible, affordable and exciting, from the Accent – judged Australia's Best Small Car for 2000 and 2001 by all the state motoring service clubs – to the luxury Grandeur V6 or the seven-seat Trajet or the stylish Santa Fe all-wheel-drive, to name just four of our nine name plates.

So, please sit forward on the edge of your seat, show your support for the Hyundai Socceroos and enjoy this next episode on their way to that ultimate goal.

Doug Croker
Managing Director
Hyundai Automotive Distributors Australia

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Socceroo goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer will be instrumental to Australia's hopes. **Page 52.**

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Aileen Berry

PUBLICATIONS MANAGER
James Weston

MANAGING EDITOR
Andrew Johnstone

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
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John Batten

PRODUCTION CO-ORDINATOR
Cathy Murray

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The World Cup is the pinnacle of soccer. Just two matches lie between Australia or Uruguay and a ticket to Japan/Korea next year

BY MICHAEL COCKERILL

THE FINAL HURDLE

URUGUAY CLAIM IT KNOWS LITTLE about Australia, but we know it is only foxing. Australian coach Frank Farina made a special trip to Montevideo to find out a little more, and it seems he is happy — if that's the right word — that Uruguay is the final barrier to World Cup qualification. So who is kidding who?

The bare facts suggest Uruguayan football has declined over the past decade at about the same rate as Australia has risen up the world rankings.

But bare facts, as we know, don't tell the whole story.

Granted, the Socceroos have no need to fear Uruguay. But, as Farina rightly points out, they have every reason to respect them. Equally, Uruguay will know — because its astute coach Victor Pua will have told it — that Australia is a genuine threat over the two legs of this World Cup playoff.

CLEARED Harry Kewell, here leaping over Arsenal's Lee Dixon while playing for Leeds, hopes to lead Australia to the World Cup.

PROUD SPONSORS OF
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GOAL Gonzalo De Los Santos celebrates scoring against Venezuela.

SOUTH AMERICAN OBSERVERS VIEW URUGUAY AS A TEAM WHICH DOES NOT ALWAYS REFLECT THE SUM OF ITS PARTS.

The only truth is that the outcomes in Melbourne and Montevideo are balanced on a knife edge.

It is 11 years since Uruguay last qualified for the World Cup, and its performances in Italy hinted at things to come. Uruguay scraped into the second round before promptly being dispatched by the host nation in Rome in a dour, fractious affair.

Despite boasting exciting talents such as Enzo Francescoli, Ruben Sosa and Daniel Fonseca, the Uruguayans were mired in the sterile, negative tactics which unfortunately made Italia '90 the worst World Cup in history.

You could see, even then, that this was a team in decline.

For a nation which won the first ever World Cup in 1930 and then claimed the Jules Rimet trophy once again in an unforgettable final before a world record crowd of more than 200,000 (yes, 200,000) in Rio de Janiero 20 years later, the last

decade has been especially hard to take.

Two World Cups have come and gone, and Uruguay has found itself usurped by South American upstarts such as Bolivia, Colombia, Chile and Paraguay. A once-proud soccer nation reduced to the ranks of also-rans, although a Copa America success in 1995 gave veterans like Francescoli, Sosa and Fonseca suitable reward for their devotion.

Beneath the veneer, however, something had to be done — and it was. Uruguay rebuilt from the bottom up, in the process discarding the ill-tempered, often violent, demeanour which had blotted its copybook for decades. Just ask former Socceroo Ray Baartz who, at the age of 27, was forced to retire after a karate chop to his neck almost killed him when the Uruguayan national team last visited Australia on a two-match tour in 1974.

The emerging generation was, instead, told to play with a smile on its face, and the first evidence of the new approach was seen on these shores in the World Youth (under-20) Championships of 1993.

It needed a golden goal from current Socceroo Paul Agostino to win a tight quarter-final at Lang Park in Brisbane, but Uruguayan Fabian O'Neil looked to be another gem.

The turning point came a year later, when the Uruguayan Football Association turned to Victor Pua to develop and nurture the country's best young players. Three years later, Uruguay's under-20s were back at the WYC, this time in Malaysia, and a thrilling, adventurous side made it all the way to the final before losing to Argentina. The seeds for the re-emergence of Uruguay had been sown, with the likes of goalkeeper Fabian Carini, striker Nicolas Olivera and midfielder Pablo Garcia graduating to become established members of the senior team.

A tough, tortuous, 18-game qualifying campaign for the 2002 World Cup was always going to be keenly contested, and in the end Uruguay just failed to hurdle the barrier for automatic qualification.

The strange mid-term resignation of Argentinian Daniel Passarella as coach might have had a greater effect had not it been Pua who returned to fill the post.

South American observers, among them former Australian under-17 international Marcelo Pena, who has spent the past decade playing in Chile, view Uruguay as a team which does not always reflect the sum of its parts. "Fantastic players, but they just don't seem to gel," says Pena.

Uruguay have talent, of that there is no doubt.

Up front the diminutive Malaga striker

The story so far...

Australia's path to the final World Cup Qualifier

April 9, 2001
Australia 22 - 0 Tonga

April 11, 2001
Australia 31 - 0 American Samoa

April 14, 2001
Australia 2 - 0 Fiji

April 16, 2001
Australia 11 - 0 Samoa

June 20, 2001
Australia 2 - 0 New Zealand

June 24, 2001
Australia 4 - 1 New Zealand

Uruguay's path here

March 29, 2000
Uruguay 1 - 0 Bolivia

April 26, 2000
Paraguay 1 - 0 Uruguay

June 3, 2000
Uruguay 2 - 1 Chile

June 28, 2000
Brazil 1 - 1 Uruguay

July 18, 2000
Uruguay 3 - 1 Venezuela

July 26, 2000
Uruguay 0 - 0 Peru

August 15, 2000
Colombia 1 - 0 Uruguay

September 2, 2000
Uruguay 4 - 0 Ecuador

October 8, 2000
Argentina 2 - 1 Uruguay

November 15, 2000
Bolivia 0 - 0 Uruguay

March 28, 2001
Uruguay 0 - 1 Paraguay

April 24, 2001
Chile 0 - 1 Uruguay

Sunday July 1, 2001
Uruguay 1 - 0 Brazil

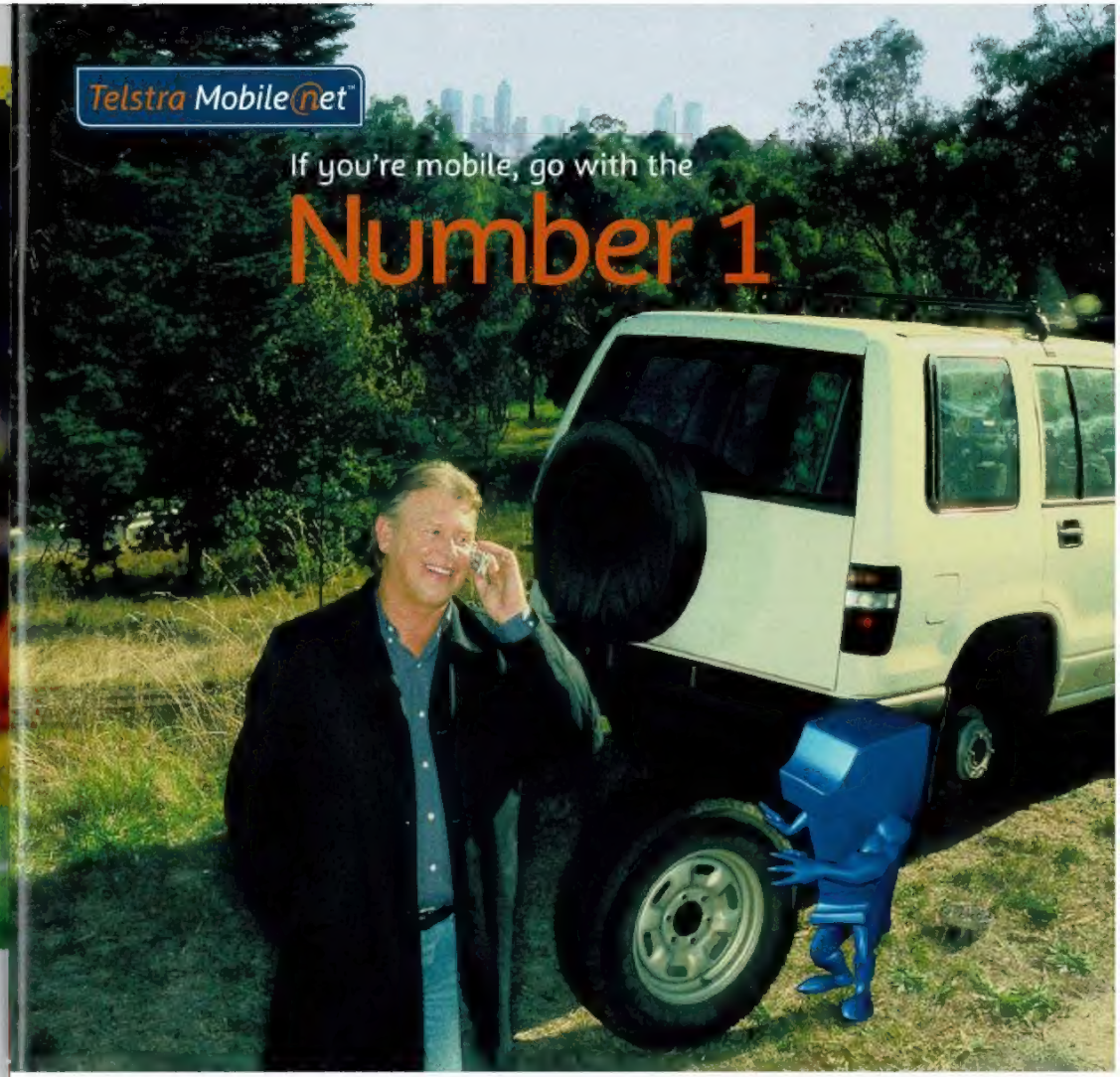
August 14, 2001
Venezuela 2 - 0 Uruguay

September 4, 2001
Peru 0 - 2 Uruguay

October 7, 2001
Uruguay 1 - 1 Colombia

November 7, 2001
Uruguay 1 - 1 Ecuador

November 14, 2001
Uruguay 1 - 1 Argentina



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Dario Silva is a constant thorn, in midfield Pablo Garcia is always composed while the attack-minded Olivera played a large part in earning Sevilla promotion back to the top flight in Spain this season.

At the back, Juventus hardman Paolo Montero is among the best at his craft in the world, while in goals the emerging Carini has caught the eye.

But if there is a jewel in the crown, it is unquestionably dead-ball specialist Alvaro Recoba, who has kept fit during his controversial suspension for passport irregularities in Italy by doing his best for the national team.

Recoba is the star turn of this Uruguayan team, and Farina — having witnessed his contribution first hand during a qualifier against Colombia last month — knows it.

Nicknamed 'El Chino' because of his Asiatic appearance, Recoba's left foot has delivered a goal every three games for Inter Milan, many of them from set pieces. He was one of 16 overseas-based players assembled for Uruguay's final two qualifying matches, all of whom play in either Italy or Spain. The days of the Uruguayan selection being dominated by the traditional domestic giants of Nacional and Penarol are long gone, and like his Australian counterpart Pua has to battle constantly to get his players released from their European clubs.

"AUSTRALIA DESERVES TO QUALIFY FOR THE WORLD CUP FINALS."

– FRENCH COACH ROGER LEMERRE

Australia has met Uruguay just four times at senior level, and lost just once — with a largely home-based squad in Montevideo nine years ago. The first two meetings were in 1974, a scoreless draw here in Melbourne at Olympic Park followed by the infamous brawling encounter at the Sydney Cricket Ground a few days later.

But the most relevant fixture between these two countries came in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, four years ago when a shell-shocked Socceroo side somehow galvanised itself to eclipse Uruguay on golden goals in the semi-finals of the Confederations Cup, just a few weeks after the bitter World Cup failure at the hands of Iran.

The scorer that day was Harry Kewell, who again carries the hopes of his nation at the MCG tonight. Among the other survivors from the Confederations Cup meeting are Recoba, Montero, Garcia from Uruguay, and our own Mark Viduka, Josip Skoko, Kevin Muscat and Stan Lazaridis.

The recent form of each team is more promising for the Socceroos. While Uruguay has limped to the end of the CONMEBOL qualifying, the Socceroos have barely missed a beat.

After breezing through Oceania qualifying, during which they netted a world-record 31 goals against American Samoa, the Socceroos comfortably accounted for New Zealand 6-1 over a two-legged playoff.

The one doubt hanging over the team was how well it would adjust to the return of the higher profile players, such as Harry Kewell and Mark Viduka, who had missed the earlier matches.

Any worries coach Farina may have had regarding team chemistry were laid to rest by a very solid performance against reigning world champions France earlier this month.

On a rain-soaked evening at the MCG on November 11, the Socceroos played Les Bleus to a 1-1 standstill, and probably considered themselves unlucky not to have won.

Harry Kewell vied with French star Zinedine Zidane, the world's most expensive player, as the most influential player on the pitch.

France controlled much of the early going without creating many clear-cut opportunities and it wasn't until Kewell began to exert his influence on the pitch that the Socceroos calmed down.

A weaving Kewell run ended with a pass to Brett Emerton, who should have done better with a clear one-on-one opportunity against French 'keeper Fabien Barthez, who pushed his shot over for a corner.

Then, at the 44-minute mark, a Stan Lazaridis corner was flicked to Craig Moore who headed into the back of the net.

France equalised four minutes after the break and the match petered out as both sides substituted heavily, although the Australians were unlucky not to get a penalty just minutes from time.

Despite having harsh words for Kevin Muscat's challenge on Christophe Dugarry, the French coach

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as they line up in the Green and Gold for Australia's 2004 world cup qualifier

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Mark Viduka, Danny Tiatto, Steve Horvat
Le Mans Toyota, and
The Melbourne Knights

LEADING BY EXAMPLE
Uruguayan captain Pablo Garcia fights for a header with Brazil's Juninho Paulista.

GOOD JOB Uruguayan players celebrate their historic victory over Brazil during this year's World Cup qualifying matches.

AUSTRALIA WILL NEED TO TAKE RISKS TO ENSURE AN ADVANTAGE IS TAKEN TO MONTEVIDEO NEXT WEEK.

Roger Lemerre was impressed by the Socceroos.

"Australia deserves to qualify for the World Cup finals. I was reacquainted with all the Australian qualities that I had already discovered in the Confederations Cup," he said. "The Socceroos are a well organised side, strong-willed and strongly motivated who play well together."

He was particularly impressed with Australia's organisation. "I don't really like to single out individual performances, I was more impressed with the Socceroos as a team. Like France, Australia's best players have gone overseas to Italy, the UK or Holland so they are obviously top-class players.

"Both times I have come up against Australia I have been struck by the Socceroos' determination to stick to their 4-4-2 formation, to occupy the whole ground, to get forward in numbers and quickly when they can do so."

Much more is at stake, of course, over the next 90 minutes. Uruguay will, in all likelihood, try to absorb pressure and surprise the Socceroos on the counter with the speedy Silva and the equally elusive Recoba.

Australia, as it must, will need to take risks to ensure an advantage is taken to Montevideo next week.

Farina will have to utilise all his offensive options to force the issue, and the good news is that the Socceroos have rarely been blessed with such an attacking armoury.

Farina knows that unless Australia capitalises on its home ground advantage, qualifying for the World Cup could remain an elusive dream. ⊛

Michael Cockerill is a sportswriter for **The Sydney Morning Herald** *and a commentator for Channel Seven.*

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Teammates for Leeds, teammates for Australia — Mark Viduka and Harry Kewell share many traits, and now they must share the weight of a nation's expectations

BY DAVID LEWIS

TWO OF A KIND

IT WAS A SCENE TO WARM THE HEART OF the most cynical Australian soccer fan The biggest soccer club in the world, Manchester United, was playing at home against Leeds United. The match see-sawed as these two elite teams tried to break each other down. Eventually the deadlock was broken in the 76th minute. Harry Kewell laid the ball off for teammate Ian Harte who swung a cross in. Centre forward Mark Viduka pounced to slot the ball home from six yards out

Never mind that Man U, as is its want, found a way to equalise. In front of 67,000 rabid fans, the Manchurian defence had been repeatedly terrorised by two Australians. On the Premier League's biggest stage, these men from down under had shone brightly, like a beacon for the high water mark of Australian soccer

Socceroo coach Frank Farina must thank the soccer Gods for blessing his team with two such towering talents, who play and train together day in, day out. Now, he just needs them to reproduce their form for their country.

Viduka, the Melbourne-born striker who netted 22 goals in his debut Premier League season, thinks that the Socceroo team has what it takes to reach the World Cup finals.

"We like to think this is the best collection of Australian talent ever, now is our chance to prove it," says Viduka, who skipped the Confederations Cup and the two qualifiers against New Zealand in June to regain his equilibrium after a gruelling 58-match campaign for Leeds.

He's now raring to go.

"I personally have the hunger back (for the national team). I needed a rest in the (northern) summer after a long season with Leeds where I hardly missed a match after returning from the Olympic Games (in October)

"I was exhausted and my body was telling me to take a complete break from playing If I'd carried on into June I'd have risked burning myself out and then I'd have been no use to anybody further down the track."

He is also excited to be playing in his place of birth.

"I love playing for Australia anywhere and I have a big patriotic streak. But to appear in front of my home town crowd in Melbourne, well that's extra special," he says.

Kewell is similarly excited about the game, despite some critics views

"I'm as proud as any Australian when I pull on that green and gold shirt," he says. "I'm disappointed when people question my commitment because I had to make a choice and I opted for Australia. I have no regrets about that."

Kewell and Viduka share something else: burgeoning bank balances.

Just four months ago Leeds chairman Peter Ridsdale confirmed the Elland Road club had rejected a $55m bid from Italians Inter Milan for Viduka, a sum which would have provided a $38m return on their initial investment on the powerful predator.

Instead they rewarded Viduka with an upgraded four year deal worth a staggering $7.5m a season — that's a cool $130,000 a week, and more than enough to keep his beloved Rottweiler Tara in bones, or caviar should she prefer, for a multitude

STRAIGHT AHEAD With Kewell and Viduka at the top of their game, Leeds was on top of the Premier League in early November.

of lifetimes. Kewell reportedly receives a $150,000-a-week wage.

Farina is an unabashed admirer of both players. "Mark possesses the sort of ability very few others in the world have," he says. "In my view he's an old fashioned modern centre forward. By that I mean he holds the ball up well yet also has great balance and technique and two very quick feet.

"He's always looking to create chances for others which is why David O'Leary (Leeds coach) always picks him, even when he's not hitting the net regularly. That's a sure sign of how highly rated he is by his club.

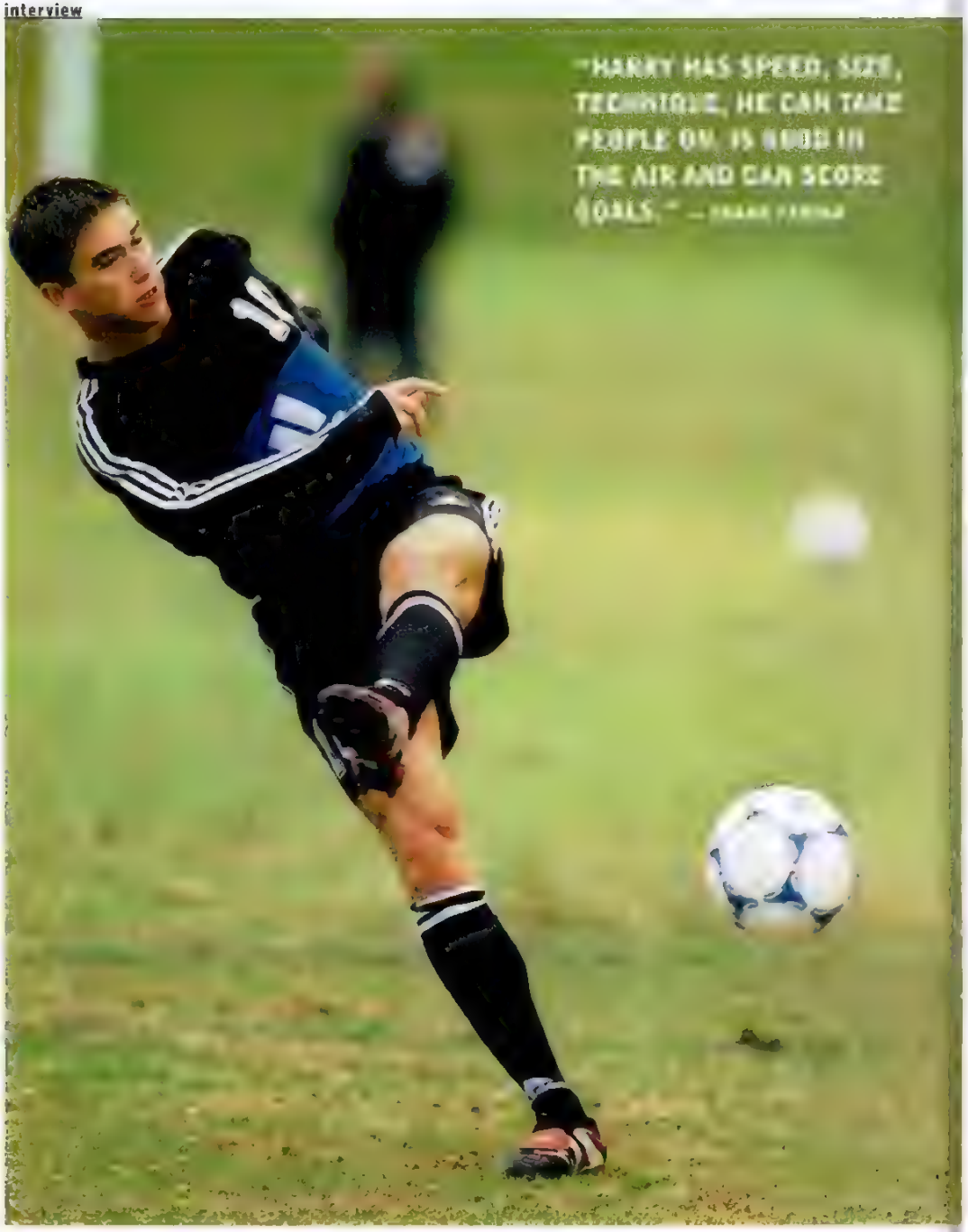
"It's the same for his country. Whether he is scoring goals or not is not really my prime concern because of what he brings to the team in other areas. He's the type of player who brings everybody else into play."

If anything, he's even more complimentary about Leeds' left-footed mid fielder.

"Harry has speed, size, technique, he can take people on, is good in the air and can score goals. Is there anything I forgot?" he says. "There's also a natural shyness about him. I like the manner he displays both on and off the field. He doesn't seek the limelight like some players do and is not a big time Charlie. He just gets on with it and lets his feet do all the talking."

The feeling is certainly mutual. Kewell, who is flourishing again after being afflicted with Achilles tendon problems for the bulk of last season, is a firm fan of Farina and credits him with helping him come to terms with the club versus country dilemmas which have brought him unwanted headlines and provided ammunition for his detractors.

"Frank has played at the top level in Italy and France and he understands the difficulties players face when trying to juggle their club commitments with their country," he says. "I'm always available for Frank when he decides to pick me. He tries to call me up only for the



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CONTROL Viduka brings down a high ball against Southampton

POWERFUL FORCE Viduka's strength makes him a tough opponent.

matches that really matter and of course I appreciate that."

However, if one of Farina's predecessors, Eddie Thompson, hadn't spotted Kewell's ability so early, Australia may have been battling England for his services.

"I wanted to tie him up for Australia rather than lose him to England and I'm proud of what he's gone on to achieve," adds Thomson "I did the same with Mark Viduka when he was 18 and a possible target for Croatia

"I also selected Harry for his first cap because I was short on players for the game and he didn't let me down. We had a player sent off after 20 minutes and went down 3-0 but Harry was outstanding. He was at left back and I told him just to play things simple. After three minutes he sold Ivan Zamorano a dummy and strolled away with the ball and I knew then he had something extra special.

"Afterwards I got a call from Alex Ferguson at Manchester United wanting to know about him. I told him Harry was a champion. He'd waltz into the England team now; I know they wish they had him.

"I knew from the moment I saw him play he was something really special. He and Brett Emerton were the fullbacks against Spain, Nigeria and Brazil and they were superb. When I got back to Australia I said (about Kewell) to TV reporters at the airport that I'd just discovered the best wingback-cum-midfielder Australia as has ever produced. I also knew he'd one day be even better as an attacker."

When Thomson telephoned Leeds a little over a year later to request Kewell's release for that fateful friendly with Chile, the Yorkshire club's hierarchy thought it was a practical joke.

"Once I'd convinced them I was serious, I didn't have a problem getting him. He was in the reserves in those days and Leeds weren't too worried about losing him."

Now, there's no doubt Viduka and Kewell will be in the first team. So how do they survive the rigors of top-flight soccer?

"You need to have a bit an ego at this level otherwise you get eaten alive," says Viduka. "I'm used to being in the spotlight and under pressure and it doesn't faze me. I've learned to deal with it. I try and stay centred and not get to carried away when things are going well or too depressed when they are not. I try to stay level-headed at all times."

After an erratic opening to the current campaign with Leeds the former Melbourne Knight acknowledges he's still in the process of lopping the rough edges from his game.

"I tend to be a slow starter and this season hasn't been any different," he admits. "But I'm getting there steadily. My fitness is improving and hopefully the goals will soon start to flow. The best is certainly yet to come from me."

Australia soccer fans certainly hope so, for the hopes of a nation rest on the broad shoulders of these two soccer stars. If they hit the top of their game, the Uruguayan defence might just discover how Manchester United felt in late October. ⊛

ON THE RISE

FOLLOWING A SERIES OF STUNNING PERFORMANCES, BRETT EMERTON IS ONE OF THE BEST YOUNG PROSPECTS IN EUROPEAN SOCCER

BY PATRICK DUNCAN

IT WAS ONE OF THE MOST DEPRESSING days to be an Australian soccer fan. The Socceroos were playing Chile at Olympic Park in Melbourne, just two months after World Cup elimination at the hands of Iran, and the mood was funereal. The rain bucketed down all evening, Australia scarcely had a shot on target, and a 1-0 defeat flattered the hosts.

A colourful, boisterous Chilean contingent made all the noise while most Australian fans, still reliving every kick of the Iran encounter, hardly noticed that there was another soccer match unfolding before them. When Socceroo coach Terry Venables brought on 18-year-old midfielder Brett Emerton for his international debut with 15 minutes left, it barely raised a murmur.

Four years on, Australian soccer supporters are decidedly more upbeat. The Socceroos are ready for their latest attempt to join the class of '74 World Cup finalists and that man Emerton is set to play a pivotal role. His development in the last 12 months has been little short of astonishing. A $1.5 million transfer last year from National Soccer League club, Sydney Olympic, to former European Cup winners, Dutch side Feyenoord, ought to have been daunting enough for the young Australian, but it was apparently only the beginning.

After a remarkable first season in Europe, he seems sure to be on his way to the English Premier League, with talk of a possible $25 million transfer to Leeds United, Arsenal or Liverpool filling the sports pages in England. Brett seems accepting of the media speculation that has accompanied his rise to fame. "You learn to deal with it," he says matter-of-factly.

"He's a kid who's got all the gifts," claims Craig Foster, a veteran of Australia's 1997 World Cup campaign. "You can't buy the pace that Brett Emerton's got. He's a massive talent and now he looks well placed to give Harry Kewell and Mark Viduka a run for their money as far as being our best performed player. There's only a small handful who can really be something special. Viduka had that from a young age. Kewell did too, and Brett has it as well."

He may seem like an overnight sensation, but Emerton has, in some ways, taken the long road to the top. Raised in Sydney, he was enrolled at the New South Wales Soccer Academy under the tutelage of David Lee, the Director of Coaching. Lee recognised the potential of Emerton and another young lad, Harry Kewell, and arranged for them to take advantage of a "Big Brother" scholarship scheme, spending four weeks training with Leeds United. At the end of that month the English club was keen to sign both players. Kewell had a British passport, and was able to accept the offer. Emerton didn't, and wasn't.

"It was frustrating at the time," said Emerton. "One door closed but another one opened." That door led to the National Soccer League and to the 1995 under-17 world championships. In the finals in Ecuador, the Joeys put up a spirited showing, reaching the quarter finals before losing to Brazil.

Joeys captain Clayton Bell, now with South Melbourne in the NSL, had no doubt as to the standout players in his team. "Brett Emerton and Harry Kewell together in that team, they were always going to go places. They both had skill and a huge work rate.

"Brett was a great team player, but he had that individual flair as well. The way we played you had to be back and defending, and up there attacking too. So Brett needed the

"(EMERTON) WAS PARTICULARLY QUIET AND UNASSUMING, BUT YOU COULD TELL HE HAD CONFIDENCE IN HIS ABILITY."

SO CLOSE Emerton shoots just wide against France in June.

defensive skills, but he also had to be able to beat a player and get a cross in."

Both Kewell's and Emerton's dedication to their sporting careers was evident even then. "When you're 16," says Bell, "you've got your friends and you want to get out and have fun, but Harry was always amazingly committed – it was just soccer, soccer, soccer and I think Brett was the same."

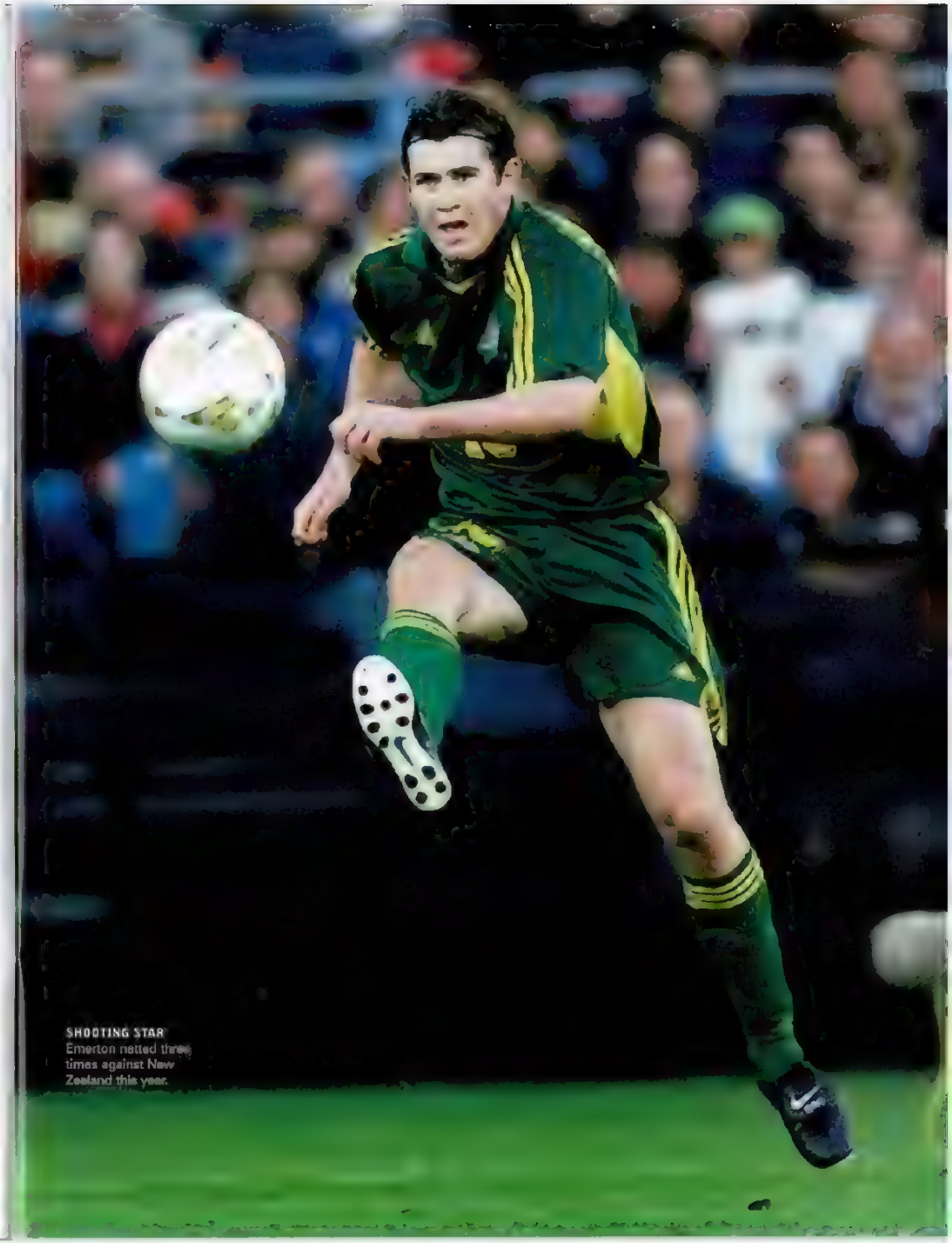
Emerton joined NSL club Sydney Olympic and set about proving himself in senior soccer. Former Socceroo and dual NSL champion Kimon Taliadoros played against Emerton before transferring to Olympic himself, and was impressed with the teenage midfielder from the outset.

"Brett always demonstrated exceptional athletic ability," says Taliadoros. "Not only his fitness, but his speed. And since then his close skills have improved significantly. He was particularly quiet and unassuming, but you could tell he had confidence in his football ability. He seemed to be a very humble person, very mature, and his attitude was always professional."

Emerton took the next step up at international level and was an integral part of the under-20 Young Socceroos team that qualified for the 1997 World Youth Championships in Malaysia. The Australian team looked to be on the verge of an early exit from the competition against Hungary until an 89th-minute marauding run and pinpoint cross from Emerton was met with a fierce header from striker Danny Allsopp to win the match. The Young Socceroos then beat eventual champions Argentina 4-3, but were eliminated by Japan in the round of 16.

Emerton, though, had shown the Australian coaching staff that he was ready for the big boys. Eight months after the World Youth Championships, Brett made his senior debut, setting the wheels in motion for a transfer to a European club.

The thing was, he didn't seem in that much of a hurry to turn his life upside down to move to the northern hemisphere. "Brett's career has been planned so well," says Foster. "He's a great role model for young players. So many careers are haphazard, take what comes, and if you get an offer to play in Europe, you get an offer. But he's shown a lot of patience and a level of maturity beyond his years in waiting for the right offer at the right time in his career. The NSL is a good maturing ground and Brett has shown that."



SHOOTING STAR Emerton netted three times against New Zealand this year.

WEAVING Emerton scored after a breath-taking run against Scotland this year

Emerton was content to bide his time, clocking up national team appearances against the likes of 1998 World Cup semi-finalists, Croatia, the Brazilian Olympic team, Manchester United, and a FIFA World XI at the opening of Stadium Australia, while assuming responsibility beyond his years as midfield linchpin for Sydney Olympic.

He also received a tempting offer from Raul Blanco, coach of the Australian Olympic soccer team. Would Brett like to captain his country at the 2000 Olympic Games? Emerton was ecstatic, declaring, "I might not have got a work permit at Leeds United, but (being appointed Olyroos captain) is a dream come true."

Sydney 2000, although a major boost for the nation as a whole, proved to be a disaster for its Olympic soccer team. Kewell and Paul Okon were late withdrawals through injury and, drawn in the toughest group, the Australians were eliminated almost before Cathy Freeman had lit the Olympic flame. The Socceroos lost after a late goal by Italy in front of 93,000 spectators at the MCG, which was followed by another narrow loss to reigning Olympic champions Nigeria, ending the Olyroos' interest in the tournament. To make matters worse, Emerton was sent off against the Africans.

His red card indiscretion notwithstanding, Emerton's performances had only increased the clamour of overseas clubs on his trail. When Feyenoord, a perennial contender in the European Champions League, made a firm offer, the Sydneysider decided the time was finally right to head north. In the 12 months since, Emerton has not only established himself in the Feyenoord team, but become one of the star players in a Dutch league that has been a breeding ground to footballers of the quality of Johan Cruyff, Ronaldo and Dennis Bergkamp, among countless others.

Emerton has also continued to don the green and gold shirt, blossoming into an international matchwinner. A devastating run and clinical finish silenced the fanatical Scottish fans in Glasgow last November, while three goals in the two World Cup elimination matches mid-year helped account for New Zealand. Brett also starred in the Confederations Cup in June, and was only centimetres away from scoring against world champions, France, before Clayton Zane's winning goal.

"His improvement over the last two to three years is nothing short of phenomenal," says Foster. "He spent his maturing years in Australia, so as soon as he went overseas he was able to excel. He wouldn't be intimidated now by a move to one of the big English clubs — he sees that as a natural progression from where he's gone and where he's going, and fair enough. I couldn't be more pleased for him."

Bell, too, is full of admiration for the singlemindedness of his former Joeys teammate. "Brett's done brilliantly, to stay in Australia for as long as he did and not to lose focus, to be able to keep improving when he was already one of the best players in Australia. His desire to become successful speaks for itself. He's never lost sight of what he wanted to do, and it's so good to see him doing so well."

Emerton, whom Lee describes as "a very honest individual, just a good human being", seems headed for the top of the world game, albeit by a slightly unconventional route. But then, as Emerton said while still a Sydney Olympic player, "If you're good enough, the opportunities will come." ⊗

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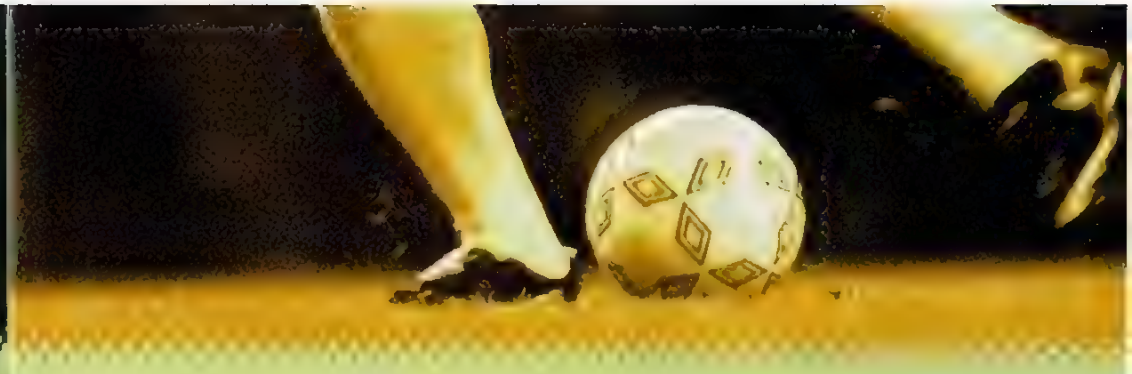


GOALKEEPERS

ZELJKO KALAC
(Roda JC Kerkrade)
Born: December 16, 1972
Height: 202cm
Weight: 91kg
Career: Sydney United, Leicester City, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Roda JC Kerkrade
Caps: 38
Debut: v Malaysia (1992)

Giant goalkeeper, inevitably nicknamed "Spider", Kalac has great athleticism and, not surprisingly, is dominant in the air. Currently playing in the Dutch first division with Roda JC.

MARK SCHWARZER
(Middlesbrough)
Born: October 6, 1972
Height: 196cm. Weight. 86kg
Career: Marconi, Dynamo Dresden, Kaiserslautern, Bradford City, Middlesbrough
Caps: 17. Debut: v Canada (1993)

Rated one of the best goalkeepers in the English premier league, Schwarzer cuts a commanding figure in the Middlesbrough goal. Started his career in Sydney with Marconi, where Christian Vieri was a teammate, before joining Germany's Dynamo Dresden and then Kaiserslautern. Signed for Bradford City in November 1996 and he is still regarded as one of the best keepers the club ever had, despite joining Boro just four months later.

DEFENDERS

CRAIG MOORE
(Glasgow Rangers)
Born: December 12, 1975
Height: 186cm
Weight: 76kg
Career: Glasgow Rangers, Crystal Palace, Glasgow Rangers
Caps: 20. Debut: v Ghana (1995)
Goals: 2

The talented central defender rejoined Rangers at the end of March 1999 on a free transfer as part of a cost-cutting exercise by then newly-relegated English division one Crystal Palace. Moore had first played in Rangers' senior side in 1993-94, but the arrival of big name overseas stars saw him decide to head south to London in October 1998 for a fee of $2.5million. Forms an excellent partnership at club and international level with Tony Vidmar, areas.

STEVE HORVAT
(Melbourne Knights)
Born: March 4, 1971
Height: 186cm
Weight: 85kg
Career: Melbourne Knights, Hajduk Split, Carlton, Melbourne Knights
Caps: 28
Debut: v South Africa (1994)

The former Hajduk Split player can play as sweeper or stopper, reads the play well and is strong in the air. Attempts to play in England were foiled by work permit problems and the experienced Horvat is now back with Melbourne Knights.

KEVIN MUSCAT
(Wolverhampton Wanderers)
Born: August 7, 1973
Height: 180cm
Weight: 73kg
Career: Sunshine, Heidelberg, South Melbourne, Crystal Palace, Wolverhampton Wanderers
Caps: 40
Debut: v Kuwait (1994)
Goals: 9

Has a well-deserved reputation as a rugged defender with a crunching tackle. However, Muscat also has considerable skill and has spent the past five years playing in England.

Joined Crystal Palace in 1996 and helped them win promotion to the premier league but was then transferred to division one Wolves for $500,000. Has become a huge favourite with the club, is the current skipper and a former player of the year.

SHAUN MURPHY
(Sheffield United)
Born: November 5, 1970
Height: 185cm
Weight: 76kg
Career: Blacktown City, Heidelberg, Notts County, West Bromwich Albion, Sheffield United
Caps: 18
Debut: v Chile (2000)
Goals: 3

No-nonsense defender who has been playing in England for nine years now. Joined Sheffield United on a free transfer from West Brom in the northern summer of 1999 and has established himself as a first team regular and crowd favourite with the Yorkshire club.

Has impressed at international level when given his chance.

TONY VIDMAR
(Glasgow Rangers)
Born: July 4, 1970
Height: 187cm
Weight: 80kg
Career: Adelaide City, Ekeren, NAC Breda, Glasgow Rangers
Caps: 51
Debut: v Czechoslovakia (1991)
Goals: 2.

Originally a left sided defender, Vidmar has now developed into a classy central defender with the Scottish premier league giant. Loves to get forward and can cause a lot of trouble in opposition penalty.

TONY POPOVIC
(Crystal Palace)
Born: July 4, 1973
Height: 193cm
Weight: 90kg
Career: Sydney United, Sanfrecce Hiroshima, Crystal Palace
Caps: 41. Debut: v Colombia (1995)
Goals: 6

Highly-rated defender who joined the South London club earlier this season and has already gone a long way to stabilising a defence which let in 70 goals last season. Strong and reliable, with an eye for goal. Popovic is cool on the ball and rarely wasteful when it comes to distributing it.

MIDFIELD

MILE STERJOVSKI
(Lille)
Born: May 27, 1979
Height: 180cm
Weight: 79kg
Career: Wollongong Wolves, Sydney United, Parramatta Power, Lille
Caps: 3
Debut: v Scotland (2000)

Making a name for himself in the French first division with Lille, a club which has come from division two to a Champions League berth in just two seasons.

The small Brittany town is having a wonderful time of it and Sterjovsk, has become a firm favourite, starting his European campaign with a full match against Manchester United at Old Trafford in September.

Classy young striker likely to attract attention from Europe's biggest clubs.

MARCO BRESCIANO
(Empoli)
Born: November 2, 1980
Height: 172cm
Weight: 76kg
Career: Carlton, Empoli
Caps: 6
Debut: v France (2001)

Tenacious attacking young midfielder carving out a reputation with Empoli in Italy's Serie B and rumoured to be already attracting talent scouts from the country's Serie A giants.

JOSIP SKOKO
(Racing Genk)
Born: December 10, 1975
Height: 177cm
Weight: 77kg
Career: Hajduk Split, Racing Genk
Caps: 21
Debut: v Macedonia (1997).
Goals: 2.

Skoko's midfield creativity is an asset to the national team. Exquisite close control and eye-of-the-needle passing makes Skoko the type of player to turn a match with one touch. Currently playing in the Belgian first division with Racing Genk after a successful spell in Croatia.

PAUL OKON
(Middlesbrough)
Born: April 5, 1972
Height: 180cm
Weight: 80kg
Career: Marconi Stallions, FC Bruges, Lazio, Fiorentina, Middlesbrough
Caps: 32
Debut: v Czechoslovakia (1991)
Goals: 1

The Socceroos' much-travelled captain is currently with English premier league Middlesbrough, the third European country in which he has graced the top flight since leaving Sydney. Fine reader of the play and an accurate distributor, Okon enjoys playing sweeper but is also at home running the midfield.

DANNY TIATTO
(Manchester City)

Born: May 22, 1973
Height: 175cm
Weight: 73kg.
Career: Melbourne Knights, Salernitana, Stoke City, Manchester City.
Caps: 23.
Debut: v Colombia (1995).
Goals: 1.

Speedy left-sided midfielder who has been one of the Socceroos' great improvers in recent years. Has learned to curb a fearsome temper although his tough tackling and uncompromising attitude can still get him into trouble.

Became a regular first team player in the season Manchester City swept through the English first division one to win promotion. Last season was a wretched one for the club and the performances of Tiatto were just about the only bright spot, earning him City's player of the year award.

STEVE CORICA
(Sanfrecce Hiroshima)

Born: March 24, 1973
Height: 173cm
Weight: 68kg
Career: Marconi Stallions, Leicester City, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Sanfrecce Hiroshima
Caps: 40
Debut: v Kuwait (1993)
Goals: 7

The experienced Corica is an efficient link between midfield and attack with good ball skills and a good shot. Is currently playing in Japan's J-League after distinguished spell in England with Wolves.

BRETT EMERTON
(Feyenoord)

Born: January 22, 1979
Height: 185cm.
Weight: 85kg.
Career: Sydney Olympic, Feyenoord
Caps: 25
Debut: v Chile (1998).
Goals: 4

Surely destined to be the next Socceroo superstar after Kewell and Viduka, Emerton's speed and ball control makes him a constant threat on the wing. He has thrilled local crowds for many years with his ability and willingness to take on opposition defences. Now with Dutch giant Feyenoord, but hotly pursued by a number of clubs. Captained the Olympic team for Sydney 2000.

STAN LAZARIDIS
(Birmingham City)

Born: August 16, 1972
Height: 175cm
Weight: 76kg
Career: Adelaide Sharks, West Ham United, Birmingham City.
Caps: 53
Debut: v Kuwait (1993)

Vastly experience wingback who was a big success in the English premier division with West Ham before a big money move to division one Birmingham in the summer of 1999. Pace and overlapping skills make him a constant threat to opposing defences. Also offers a goalscoring option from free kicks.

STRIKERS

MARK VIDUKA
(Leeds United)

Born: October 9, 1975
Height: 187cm
Weight: 91kg
Career: Melbourne Knights, Croatia Zagreb, Glasgow Celtic, Leeds United
Caps: 17.
Debut: v South Korea (1993)
Goals: 2

Developing into one of world soccer's most potent strikers, Viduka arrived at English premier league Leeds at the start of last season with a big reputation, after being named Scottish premier league player of the year in 2000 following stunning 27-goal season with Celtic.

The big, strong and surprisingly skilful Viduka began his Leeds career quietly and it wasn't until he returned from Olympics duty with the Olyroos last September that he really started to make the English top flight sit up and take notice.

Liverpool has cause to remember him, the Melbourne-raised striker scoring all four goals in a memorable 4-3 win against the Merseysiders. Cost Celtic $9 million when they signed him from Croatia Zagreb and Leeds paid nearly double that to take him to Elland Road. Big-name clubs such as Real Madrid and AC Milan were willing to pay a lot more for him, but Viduka signed a new five-year contract with Leeds in July this year.

PAUL AGOSTINO
(TSV 1860 Munich)

Born: June 9, 1975
Height: 184cm
Weight: 78kg
Career: Adelaide Sharks, Yverdon, Young Boys of Berne, Bristol City, TSV 1860 Munich
Caps: 16
Debut: v Chile, 1996
Goals: 8

Strong in the air with a powerful shot, Agostino proved a thorn in the side of many top Bundesliga defences in Germany last season. Scored a hat-trick in 17-0 win against the Cook Islands.

HARRY KEWELL
(Leeds United)

Born: September 22, 1978
Height: 179cm
Weight: 78kg.
Career: Leeds United
Caps: 11
Debut: v Chile (1996).
Goals: 3

Rated by Leeds United chairman Peter Ridsdale as worth a staggering $148 million, the 1999-2000 campaign saw Kewell pick up Britain's young player of the year award and the Leeds player of the year trophy. Sydney-born Kewell made his English premier league debut in the 1995-96 season as a 17-year-old and has rapidly developed into one of the most exciting young soccer talents in the world. Fast and clever, Kewell operates wide on the left wing and is a regular scorer for his club.

Achilles tendon problems resulting in surgery marred last season but this campaign he has shown signs of returning to his best.

JOHN ALOISI
(Osasuna)

Born: February 5, 1976.
Height: 188cm
Weight: 83kg.
Career: Adelaide City, Standard Liege, Royal Antwerp, Cremonese, Portsmouth, Coventry City, Osasuna.
Caps: 24.
Debut: v Macedonia, 1997
Goals: 15

Deadly finisher with great reflexes near goal, the much-travelled Aloisi had established himself as a big favourite at Coventry City until a falling out with manager Gordon Strachan. Coventry went down and Aloisi headed for the Spanish primera liga's Osasuna. Scored six against Tonga this year.

Clayton Zane
(Lillestrom)

Born: July 12, 1977.
Height: 188cm.
Weight: 90kg
Career: Newcastle Breakers, Northern Spirit, Molde, Lillestrom
Caps: 14
Debut: v Czech Republic (2000)
Goals: 6.

Big and strong but still considered more of a creative player than a finisher, Zane is able to hold the ball up cleverly until help arrives and is also able to break wide and deliver a good cross when it is needed. Scored a hat-trick against the Cook Islands last year.

DAVID ZDRILIC
(Unterhaching)

Born: April 13, 1974
Height: 183cm.
Weight: 80kg
Career: Sydney United, FC Aarau, SSV Ulm, Unterhaching
Caps: 22.
Debut: v New Zealand (1997)
Goals: 18

Mobile and speedy, Zdrilic can cause all sorts of problems for defenders with his ability to turn quickly in confined spaces. Currently in the German second division with Unterhaching, he scored eight goals in the 31-0 thumping of little American Samoa in April last year.

DANGER MAN

If Uruguay is going to make the World Cup finals, it will need star midfielder Alvaro Recoba to be at his best

BY JOHN MACK

EARLY IN OCTOBER, AUSTRALIAN coach Frank Farina made a flying trip to Montevideo, the cosmopolitan capital of Uruguay at the mouth of the River Plate, on a mission which became crucial to Australia's chances of reaching the final stages of the World Cup for the first time since 1974.

It was the flying visit to end them all. Farina completed his task and was back in Sydney within three days of leaving.

The reason for his visit was simple: to check out the qualifying match between South American giants Uruguay and Colombia, so he could dissect and analyse the two countries which were shaping as the final hurdle for Australia to reach South Korea and Japan in 2002.

The match finished in a 1-1 draw, a result that left Uruguay odds-on to be the opponents for its final qualifier.

And on his return Farina was pumped by the media to tell them just what he had learned from his spying mission. How do the two teams play? Can we beat them? Who are their best players?

To most questions, Farina gave the usual carefully framed and cagey responses which come with coach's job description.

But to the question "Who are Uruguay's danger men?", he was more expansive.

"Alvaro Recoba and Dario Silva," he said, without hesitation. He went on: "Recoba is definitely dangerous from set pieces. Uruguay look handy in dead-ball situations and in games like that it can be set pieces which will get you wins."

Farina identified Uruguay's style of play as a loose 3-5-2 formation, with Recoba playing in the space behind the two frontrunners.

The fact that Farina named Recoba is a perfect reference for the Uruguayan's outstanding ability, considering he had played little football in the preceding months because of a one-year ban from playing for his Italian club, Inter Milan.

Recoba – nicknamed "Chino" – was one of 24 players from seven Italian clubs found to have dodgy Italian passports, a way of circumventing rules governing non-European players.

That ban was later reduced to four months, allowing Recoba to resume playing on November 1. The ban covered only club matches in Italy, which freed up Recoba to play in Uruguay's World Cup qualifiers.

But those four months were agony for a man whose life revolves around playing

DEADLY FROM DISTANCE
Recoba, here early in his international career against Colombia, loves dead ball situations.

the sport he loves and for which he is paid handsomely.

"I never gave up, not for one minute," he said of his punishment. "I kept training as though I was playing on the Sunday. It's not easy when people keep talking about non-football matters but, unfortunately, it has happened and I can't do anything about it.

"Occasionally I cannot sleep at night thinking about what might happen to me. Football is my work and my life."

Recoba is widely acknowledged as one of the world's best midfielders, in the same stratospheric bracket as Juan Sebastian Veron, David Beckham and Zinedine Zidane, and is reputed to be one of the highest-paid players on the planet on an estimated $20 million a year — almost $400,000 a week.

He is not a big man – 179cm and 79kg – and he loves to run at defences. It was his explosive bursts down the middle, in fact, which played havoc with Brazil's rearguard in a World Cup qualifier in Montevideo in July Uruguay won the match 1-0 from a Federico Magallanes penalty, earned by Recoba after a 35-metre run through the heart of the Brazilian backline.

It was that defeat which first raised serious doubts about Brazil's ability to automatically qualify for the 2002 finals and gave Australian officials serious heartburn as they contemplated the possibility of the Brazilians finishing fifth in the South American group. As Farina identified, Recoba has a left foot like a rapier and he can cut open a defence in an instant with a pass of exquisite precision. He is also an acknowledged free-kick specialist – a left-foot like David Beckham's right – and Australia's defenders will have to be ultra-careful not to concede free-kicks within range of goal tonight.

And that range may be well outside the penalty area, as Recoba is also the scorer of spectacular goals. One from open play against Empoli is reputed to have been from 60 metres. "I really hit that one," he said later. And the first of his two goals on his Inter debut against Brescia was from 40 metres.

Recoba was born in Montevideo on March 17, 1976 and he began his professional career as a 17-year-old with the Uruguayan club Danubio in 1993. And what a spectacular start it was — five goals in seven matches that season. His strike rates over the next two seasons were even better — 13 goals in 12 matches followed by 14 in 12.

His 32 goals in 31 games attracted the attention of Uruguayan giant Nacional of Montevideo, who moved in and signed him in 1996. Over the next two seasons, 1996 and 1997, he maintained his goal-a-game average with Nacional — 30 in 27 games.

Then came his move to Inter in 1997 for a fee of $20 million and his Serie A impact was both immediate and dramatic. He made his debut against Brescia on the same day as Brazilian superstar Ronaldo and scored twice in a 2-1 win.

But in only his third week there, he showed another side of his character when he flounced from the stadium after being substituted at half-time and was immediately branded a prima donna by Inter fans.

Things haven't improved much for him since and the cheers he gets from the notoriously fickle Inter fans for his occasional brilliance are overshadowed by the many boos. Recoba spent much of that first season at Inter on the bench.

So little was he playing that in a move designed to get him regular first-team football Recoba was loaned to Venezia in the 1998-99 season, when he finally showed why Inter was prepared to pay so much for him.

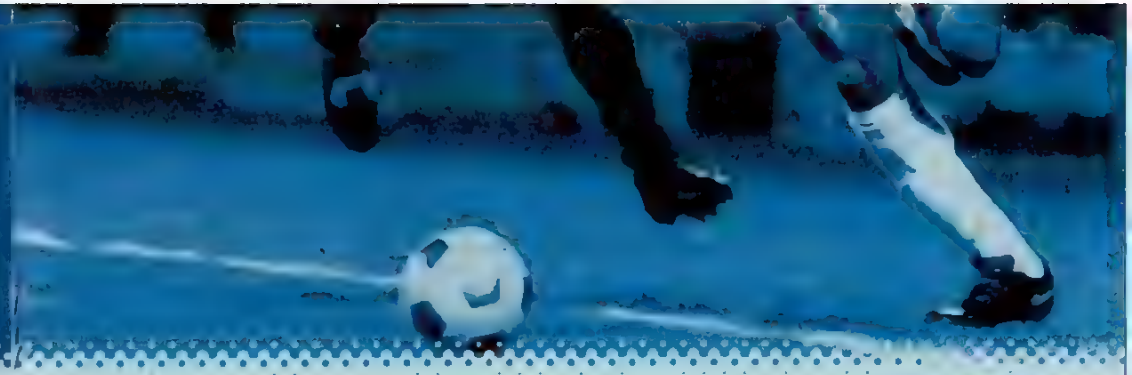
A string of brilliant performances and sensational goals almost single-handedly salvaged Serie A status for the relegation-haunted Venice club.

In the match against then-league leader Fiorentina, he scored a hat-trick — all from his trademark free-kicks. Inter took him back into the fold the following season when he played 33 league and cup matches for 10 goals. And in 2000-01 he played 41 matches in the league, Italian Cup and Europe.

Off the field, Recoba is a family man, who lives with his wife Lorena and daughter Natalie near Inter's famous San Siro stadium. His great love is fishing, and he dangles a line to escape from the pressures of football — and his critics. ⊛

ROLLERCOASTER
Recoba has had a tough time in Serie A, falling in and out of favour at Inter Milan.

URUGUAY
TEAM PROFILES



GOALKEEPERS

Gustavo Manua
(Nacional)

Born: Jan 27, 1978
Birthplace: Montevideo
Height: 183cm
Weight: 82kg
Career: Nacional

The second choice behind Carini and keen to follow him to Europe, Munua has already distinguished himself with some fine performances in the national team

Fabian Carini
(Juventus)

Born: December 26, 1979
Birthplace: Montevideo
Height: 189cm
Weight: 86kg
Career: Danubio, Juventus

Member of world youth championship-winning side who is now battling to establish himself with Italian giant Juventus. Carini has vastly experienced Italian keepers Gianluigi Buffon and Michelangelo Rampulla to contend with for Juve's top spot The 21-year-old, who played for the same Uruguayan club as star forward Alvaro Recoba before joining the Turin club, has turned in some fine performances for Uruguay during the long World Cup qualifying campaign Superb against Chile in Santiago when he defied legendary striker Ivan Zamorano to protect his side's 1-0 lead

DEFENDERS

Dario Rodriguez
(River Plate)

Born: Sept 11, 1969
Birthplace: Montevideo
Height: 183cm
Weight: 85kg
Career: River Plate

Tough and uncompromising defender who has used his long years of experience to help the youngsters drafted into the national team Good in the air and likes to get forward whenever possible

Washington Tais
(Real Betis)

Born: Dec 21, 1972
Birthplace: Montevideo
Height: 179cm
Weight: 75kg
Career: Penarol, Racing Santander, Real Betis

Experienced right back who joined Betis at the start of the season after four years as a first team regular with Racing Santander Tais and compatriot Nelson Abeijon joined Santander from Montevideo giant Penarol in July 1997

Took out Spanish citizenship in January to free up a non European Union spot in the Santander squad Unfortunately they went down, but the tough-tackling Tais is enjoying a good season with his new Spanish club

Gonzalo Sorondo
(Inter Milan)

Born: Oct 9, 1979
Birthplace: Montevideo
Height: 181cm
Weight: 80kg
Career: Defensor Sporting, Inter Milan

It's all happening for the 21-year-old Sorondo who after a year in Defensor's first team, left Montevideo in September this year to join Italian big gun Inter Milan in a $17 million transfer deal. Excellent in the air and quick, he is seen as one of his country's future stars. Overcame a serious knee ligament injury early in the season

Luis Diego Lopez
(Cagliari)

Born: Aug 22, 1974
Birthplace: Montevideo
Height: 180cm
Weight: 76kg
Career: Racing Santander, Cagliari

Opportunities have been somewhat limited for the 27-year-old Lopez, but he is a reliable defender who distributes the ball accurately Now in his fourth season with the Sardinian side Cagliari in the Italian Serie B

Paolo Montero
(Juventus)

Born: Sept 3, 1971
Birthplace: Montevideo
Height: 180cm
Weight: 75kg
Career: Penarol, Atalanta, Juventus

Has captained the national side and is the man who directs traffic at the heart of the defence Moved to Italy from Penarol in 1992 and had four years in Bergamo with Atalanta before being lured to Turin by Juventus. Since then the powerful uncompromising Montero has become an integral part of the Juve line-up, collecting two Italian championships and one world club championship among his many honours

Alejandro Lembo
(National)

Born: Feb 15, 1978
Birthplace: Montevideo
Height: 182cm
Weight: 77kg
Career: National

Classy young defender who almost moved to Inter Milan last year and is expected to move from Montevideo to bigger and better things in Europe in the near future

MIDFIELD

Marcelo Romero
(Malaga)

Born: July 4, 1976
Birthplace: Montevideo
Height: 173cm
Weight: 73kg
Career: Penarol, Malaga

Tough-tackling and creative midfielder joined the Spanish Primera Liga's Malaga this season after being a regular at home with first division Penarol Full name is Clever Marcelo Romero and coach Victor Pua wi hope he lives up to the name. Made his international debut in the 1999 Copa Libertadores

Guillermo Giacomazzi
(Lecce)

Born: Nov 21, 1977
Birthplace: Montevideo
Height: 184cm
Weight: 81kg
Career: Penarol Empoli, Lecce

Giacomazzi has made a stunning impact in his first season with Lecce proving to be a player of great imagination and flair in the midfield and the brains behind the Italian Serie A club's good start to the season Already regarded as one of the league's most influential playmakers, has good ball control and possesses a powerful shot

Nicolas Olivera
(Sevilla)

Born: May 30, 1978
Birthplace: Montevideo
Height: 165cm
Weight: 65kg
Career: Sevilla

There's not much of him in stature but what there is has won the hearts of the Sevilla faithful in Spain since he signed for them as a 21-year-old in 1999

At one stage earlier this season was averaging a goal a game in the Primera Liga and scored a stunning goal to cap a great performance in 4-0 demolition of Ecuador in September's World Cup qualifier at Montevideo's Centenario stadium

Gonzalo De Los Santos
(Valencia)

Born: July 19, 1976.
Birthplace: Salto
Height: 187cm
Weight: 82kg.
Career: Merida, Malaga, Valencia

Classy midfielder who rejected a big offer from Inter Milan to join Valencia on a six-year contract in July, a deal which meant the Spanish club had to pay a $29 million transfer fee to Malaga Seen as Uruguay's midfield general and that is how Valencia sees him too, coach Rafael Benitez signing the 25 year old as a replacement for Gaizka Mendieta when the Spanish international playmaker joined Lazio

Pablo Garcia
(Venezia)

Born: May 11, 1977.
Birthplace: Canelones
Height: 186cm
Weight: 73kg
Career: Wanderers, Atletico Madrid, AC Milan Venezia

Uruguay national captain joined AC Milan after three good years in Spain with Atletico Madrid Is currently out on loan to struggling Venezia with international striker teammate Federico Magallanes, trying to keep the club in Serie A. He failed to win a permanent spot in the starting line-up at Milan but is hoping to earn a regular berth in Venezia's midfield

Gianni Guigou
(AS Roma)

Born: Feb 22, 1975
Birthplace: Nueva Palmira
Height: 176cm
Weight: 71kg
Career: Nacional, AS Roma

Guigou, or Gianni Bismark Guigou Martinez to give him his full title,

joined Roma after four years at home playing for Nacional at the start of last season and played a part in the Romans' memorable Serie A championship triumph. A midfield workhorse who has already turned in some strong performances in the Champions League this season.

Fabian Coelho
(Nacional)

Born: Jan 20, 1977
Birthplace: Artigas
Height: 181cm
Weight: 73kg
Career: Nacional

Another home talent who looks certain to be lured to a big money contract in Europe soon, the gifted Coelho has already played in the Copa America and World Cup qualifiers for his country and the Copa Libertadores for his club. Talented ball-player with a great eye for an opening.

STRIKERS

Alvaro Recoba
(Inter Milan)

Born: Mar 17, 1976.
Birthplace: Montevideo
Height: 177cm
Weight: 76kg
Career: Danubio, Inter Milan, Venezia, Inter Milan

The jewel in the Uruguayan crown, the precocious skills of Recoba can unlock the tightest defence both at club and international level. Made the Danubio first team in Uruguay at age 17 and proceeded to score 57 goals in just 51 games. Transferred to Inter Milan in 1997 but had an inconsistent start in Italy and was loaned to fellow Serie A side Venezia for the 1999-2000 season. Back at Inter he was caught up in the false passports scandal and initially banned from playing for his club for one year. This was later reduced to four months. Recoba, nicknamed "El Chino", was still allowed to play for his country and although his form fluctuated in the World Cup qualifiers he played a big part in keeping Uruguay in contention for automatic qualification.

Dario Silva
(Malaga)

Born: Nov 2, 1972
Birthplace: Trenta y Tres.
Height: 175cm
Weight: 73kg
Career: Fenix, Cagliari, Malaga.

Goal-grabber Silva's form in World Cup qualifiers has again seen him linked to bigger European clubs with Inter Milan, Aston Villa and Athletico Madrid all expressing interest in the 28-year-old. Spent two years playing in Italy's Serie A with Cagliari and managed 13 goals in Spain's Primera Liga last season for Malaga, despite a campaign marred by injuries.

Mario Regueiro
(Racing Santander)

Born: Sept 14, 1978.
Birthplace: Montevideo.
Height: 173cm.
Weight: 71kg
Clubs: CA Cerro, Nacional, Racing Santander

The skilful and speedy Regueiro must have thought the future looked bright when he joined Santander in Spain's Primera Liga from Nacional in January after helping his home town club to the Uruguayan championship. Unfortunately, the talented left-sided striker couldn't save his new club from relegation and is now a member of a star studded side languishing near the foot of the ladder.

Vicente Sanchez
(Toluca)

Born: Dec 7 1979
Birthplace: Tacuarembo
Height: 185cm.
Weight: 75kg
Career: Tacuarembo, Nacional, Toluca

The 21-year-old youngster who can play in midfield or attack is currently performing for Toluca in southern Mexico after inadvertently playing a large part in the downfall of national coach Daniel Pasarella in February. The Argentinian selected Sanchez for the Uruguay squad to play in Europe, but Nacional took him off to Chile to play in the Copa Libertadores instead. Pasarella quit, Sanchez went to Mexico.

Javier Chevanton
(Lecce)

Born: Aug 12, 1980
Birthplace: Juan Lacaze.
Height: 178cm.
Weight: 68kg
Career: Danubio, Lecce

Making a big name for himself in Serie A in a short space of time, the 21-year-old Chevanton joined Lecce in Italy at the start of the season from Danubio, where he scored an amazing 36 goals in 38 matches to be top scorer in the Uruguayan first division. Forming a telling partnership at club and international level with midfield general Giacomazzi.

Carlos Morales
(Toluca)

Born: Nov 4, 1968
Birthplace: Montevideo.
Height: 173cm.
Weight: 77kg.
Career: Toluca

Veteran striker Morales is still finding the net in his sixth season in Mexico. Now 33, Morales was actually selected for the Paraguay squad in the 1998 World Cup in France and played in the side which drew 0-0 with Bulgaria. Now back representing the country of his birth.

Federico Magallanes
(Venezia)

Born: Aug 22, 1976
Birthplace: Montevideo.
Height: 179cm
Weight: 78kg
Career: Atalanta, Real Madrid, Defensor Sporting, Racing Santander, Venezia

Only 25, but the free-scoring Magallanes is already on his fifth professional club, joining fellow Uruguayan Pablo Garcia in September in a bid to keep Venice afloat in Serie A. Magallanes spent two years at Atalanta Bergamo, had a brief spell at Real Madrid, a year back home with Defensor Sporting then, out of contract, joined Racing Santander in Spain. Became something of a national hero when he scored the only goal of the game against Brazil, a penalty, in a World Cup qualifier in Montevideo in July.

NO FEAR Uruguayan striker Federico Magalles tumbles over Colombia's Bolano...

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A. Gordon Banks

"The Greatest Ever Save" took place in the pool match between Brazil and England at the 1970 World Cup finals in Mexico. It was 10 minutes into the game when Brazil's right winger Jairzinho burned to the by-line, knocked in a cross, which was met by Pele, who powerfully headed it down towards the far post. Banks, at the near post, sprinted then dived full stretch to palm it away... somehow. To this day, Pele still can't believe the ball didn't go in. Brazil ended up winning the game 1-0, and eventually they won the Cup 4-1 against Italy in the final.

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B. Diego Maradona

June 22, 1986 was the quarter final against England, and 114,000 people were in attendance at the main stadium in Mexico City. It was 0-0 in the 50th minute when Maradona leapt high in the air to challenge for a header, and touched it with his fist. It went over of the head of keeper Peter Shilton, the ref missed the handball and the goal counted. But then four minutes later, Maradona produced something more legitimate, and more memorable. He took off from halfway, scooted past 5 players and tapped the ball into an empty net to set up a 2-1 victory for Argentina, who went on to win the final 3-2 over Germany.

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C. Michael Owen

It was June 30, 1998 in Saint Etienne that Michael Owen, who scored 18 goals the previous Premier League season, confirmed British belief that he was a superstar. In the Round 16 match between Argentina and England, each side gave away a penalty in the first ten minutes. With the score at 1-1 in the 16th minute, a neat England movement from the back resulted in Owen getting the ball just inside the attacking half. Five seconds later the ball was in the back of the net, much to the disbelief of Argentine keeper Carlos Roa. England couldn't hold onto the lead, with Argentina scoring just before the half. With David Beckham sent off in the 47th minute, England held on until penalties, which Argentina won and progressed to the quarter final stage.

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Since his appointment as national coach, Frank Farina has led the Socceroos to some of their biggest wins. Now, on the eve of the final World Cup qualifing match, Farina speaks openly about the team's preparation, its new system and his selection quandaries

BY DOUG BOOTH

FRANKLY SPEAKING

Have you been concerned over the lack of international games?

No. I don't think so. Last time around we didn't play enough international matches We will have played 31 matches by the time we tackle the fifth South American qualifier The reality is you are never going to get your best players in all of those 31 games. But it was important to play a lot of games. I'm pleased with the amount we have played. I'm quite confident that the France game will stand us in good stead. We have played a lot more games than in past campaigns

What's the ideal number of internationals in the lead-up to a World Cup qualifier?

I said I wanted between 30 and 35 in the two years leading up to that and we've done that. It's very difficult in our situation where we don't play qualifiers apart from the island countries and New Zealand so we have to fill the gaps in other ways. My priority was to get as many games in Europe as I could purely and simply because our player base is there. The Confederations Cup and friendlies such as Chile were important

because I changed a few things from last time round.

What have you changed specifically?
We are playing a different system. I needed the players to feel comfortable about it which they are. The general formation of the team is 4-4-2. It's what we have been sticking to. I decided to make the change from the sweeper system because a lot of our players were playing in similar 4-4-2 formations with their clubs. It's very hard to get players to change the way they play when you don't have them for any length of time leading up to international games. It was very evident in the match against Brazil that we were at sixes and sevens. It was my first game in charge. I wanted to try something else and I was confident we had the players to do it.

How did you see the 1-0 win over France in June?
The French went into the Confederations Cup with a very good side — missing a few players, as we were. They are the holders of every major trophy so they don't want to lose games. On that night we played extremely well. It was arguably one of the best performances by an Australian national team.

Can we learn from the French?
I think our youth structure is going really well. We are producing a lot of good young players which is evident in the number of young players overseas. A lot head overseas before they are 17 which shows that our youth coaching and structure is working.

How do you cope with the pressure of being national coach?
I play a bit of golf. I'm a dangerous 19 handicapper at the moment. One of the biggest things I miss is the day-to-day involvement at club level. Pressure is what you make it. You make your own pressure I think. Mine is more of a positive pressure where I'm really enjoying what I'm doing and hoping to achieve what all sports-mad Australians want — that's qualification for the World Cup finals.

EXPERIENCE Having played at the highest level himself, Farina knows what his players face on the pitch

What's the situation with Mark Bosnich?
Mark's biggest problem is that he hasn't played first-team football for about two years. We used to have a wealth of keepers but now, I agree, the ranks are a little diminished. There are players back here in Australia who are doing well. But Mark's definitely not out of the question. He has a great passion for playing for his country. He's had a few problems at Chelsea where he's not playing and that doesn't help anyone but he's definitely not out of it.

TOUGH CHOICE
Farina faces some tough selection decisions.

I'M REALLY ENJOYING WHAT I'M DOING AND HOPING TO ACHIEVE WHAT ALL SPORTS-MAD AUSTRALIANS WANT — THAT'S QUALIFICATION FOR THE WORLD CUP FINALS.

And Paul Okon?
You can carry one or two players on teams that are a little bit underdone. But Paul has proven in the past that when he has been selected he has done exceptionally well. It would be a problem if I had seven to eight players in that situation, as we had last time around. It's one of my major philosophies — you can't have too many players in the team who are not playing regularly at the highest level.

What have you been doing at training?
The sessions have been very short and sharp. The large nucleus of the side has played together over 30 games. Ideally, you would like all your players to be performing at the highest level week-in, week-out. It's an unrealistic scenario for any team. But look at the French with their rotation system, that works in a lot of places — a lot of their players miss out.

How do you rate the importance of the friendly against France?
It was a great exercise for us leading into the next two matches. I couldn't have asked for better. I'm very proud of the players. They give 100 per cent every time they come together. As a coach, I'm very happy, satisfied and proud.

How much will the team change before the qualifier?
Depending on who we play from South America will largely depend on the team we select. You can rest assured that the nucleus of this side tonight will take the park. In the next two games, I will only be able to make three changes per match, so I adopted that plan for the French match. The next nine days (after the France match) our preparation will be based on getting the players physically and mentally prepared for the two biggest games in Australian soccer's history. It's an important but exciting time for all of us. ⊗

IN THE BIG TIME
Mark Schwarzer has become a fixture in the Middlesbrough goal.

KEEPING IT SAFE

Last World Cup campaign, Mark Schwarzer looked on as Mark Bosnich kept goal for Australia. Four years later, Schwarzer has established himself as the Socceroos number one goalkeeper

BY DAVID LEWIS

As a gangly 10-year-old Mark Schwarzer had grand visions of being an outfield player, until his discerning dad told him bluntly he was better suited to stopping goals than scoring them.

It was the best piece of career advice the German immigrant ever gave his son, whose giant hands clasp the Socceroos No 1 jumper with unyielding intensity.

It wasn't that Schwarzer had two left feet. It was more a case of constantly tripping over his toes that convinced his father that as an outfield performer he made a good goalkeeper.

"Of course he was right and that set me on a totally different path," said Schwarzer, whose imposing 196cm frame blocks the route to redemption for Mark Bosnich, the man he usurped as Australia's top choice between the posts.

The Middlesbrough keeper, who also played basketball, cricket and rugby league as a kid, knows all about life in limbo. He was on the outside looking in himself only two years ago after being overlooked for the 1998 World Cup qualification campaign by Terry Venables. That rejection sparked dark rumblings of impending retirement from the international stage as Schwarzer seethed in the shadows.

"I was upset and was probably a bit naive to come out publicly and say so," he recalls. "I probably would have been better off staying quiet and trying to prove my point by performing on the pitch. I probably came out looking worse than if I'd said nothing."

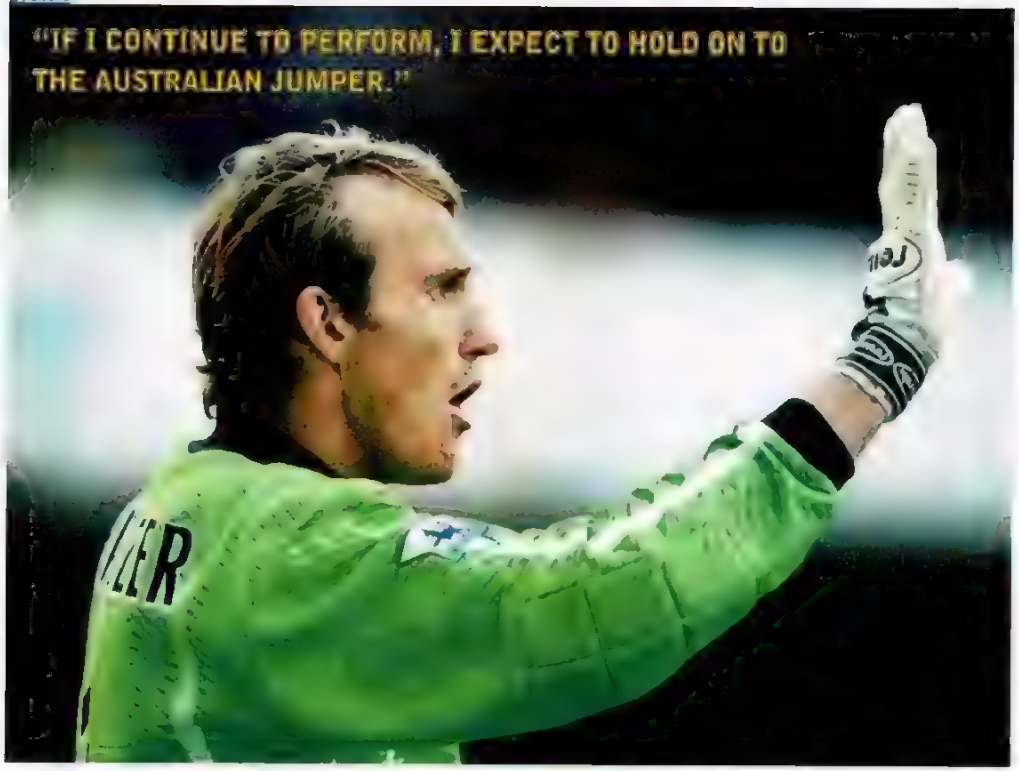
The bad blood between Venables and Schwarzer was cleansed when the Cockney miracle worker became Boro's coach last season and rescued the club from relegation.

But it took the arrival of national coach Frank Farina, a long-time admirer of Schwarzer's trapeze-artist reflexes, and Bosnich's fall from grace at Manchester United and Chelsea, to complete his renaissance.

With Bosnich's recent resurrection at Stamford Bridge, Schwarzer knows that if Australia is to qualify for Japan and Korea next year, it will be game on between the two guardians of the goal-line.

Schwarzer acknowledges it took the personal purgatory of Bosnich at Old Trafford for his own dreams to crystallise.

"Who knows what would have happened



SAFE HANDS Schwarzer keeps the ball away from a Scottish striker earlier this year.

if things had worked out for him at Old Trafford? It's probably safe to say I may never have got my chance," says Schwarzer "There are so many scenarios in football it's difficult to say for sure what would have happened. I'm just happy I got a look in and things have gone well for me over the past couple of seasons for both club and country"

Though unprepossessing and almost painfully modest, Schwarzer confirms it will be "tough" for Bosnich to pull the rug from under him.

"If I continue to perform I expect to hold on to the Australian jumper," he says. "Frank Farina has made it plain I'm currently his first choice and I feel confident that will continue to be the way. I have a lot of faith in myself

"Put it this way: I won't lose the spot without a fight."

Schwarzer, who grew up in the shadow of the Blue Mountains in Sydney's far west, relishes the battle ahead

"I'm glad Mark's made a breakthrough at Chelsea and I hope he stays in the first team and flourishes," he says. "It's a reward for a lot of hard work and patience. We all know he has great ability but sometimes there are

other factors in manager's minds when they pick a team. It's all about opinions

"I didn't get a fair chance at Kaiserslauten in Germany and Mark probably feels the same about some of the things which have happened to him over the past 20 months or so

"As a goalkeeper, you are always in the firing line. You can't hide out there on the pitch and any mistakes you make are likely to be very costly. It's a lonely position and keepers are probably a breed apart from other players. You are by yourself a lot and learn to become very self-reliant in terms of your own fitness and preparation."

Schwarzer took the first baby steps to recognition with National Soccer League club Marconi before moving to Germany – where he had spells with Kaiserslautern and Dynamo Dresden – before a brief stint with Bradford City led to Boro making him one of the highest paid keepers in the Premiership when they snapped him up four years ago.

Schwarzer is perplexed by Boro coach Steve McClaren's decision to tell Socceroo skipper Paul Okon he's not wanted at the Riverside Stadium

IN TRAINING Schwarzer is determined to hang on to his Socceroos position.
SHOT TOPPER Another striker finds his way to goal barred by the big Australian.

"I personally feel he should be in the team, especially considering how well he played under Terry Venables last year in helping to keep us up. But what can you say? The main thing is he's kept himself exceptionally fit and he won't be lacking in that area for Australia.

"He certainly won't let himself, or his country down, of that you can be sure."

And as for the potentially match-winning Mark Viduka-Harry Kewell partnership?

"They are two of the very best in England and what a bonus for us to have them in the side," he says. "They give us an extra dimension and with players of their quality why should we fear anybody?"

At 29, Schwarzer is at the peak of his prowess and performing at an altitude where others asphyxiate.

With 19 caps, he was hero for a day in 1993 when two penalty saves helped Australia get past Canada before coming up against the unbending wall of Argentina for a place at USA '94.

"I was with Marconi then and I was just starting out, so I had no complaints when Mark Bosnich was picked against Argentina."

How times have changed. ⊛

PUNCH Schwarzer clears for Middlesbrough against Chelsea.
NO WAY PAST Stopping close-range shots has become Schwarzer's signature.

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THE BEST IMAGES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

Soccer is more than just a sport in South America — it is an expression of life itself BY JOHNNY WARREN

WHEN BRITISH SETTLERS, merchants and teachers introduced the game of soccer into South America in the late 19th century, I bet they had no idea of the revolution they had unleashed. Soccer went way beyond being the most popular sport. It became the expression of life itself throughout the vast, vibrant continent.

Nowhere else on the globe does soccer permeate everyday life as it does in Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Montevideo and the dozens of other soccer-crazy cities from the Amazon to Tierra del Fuego.

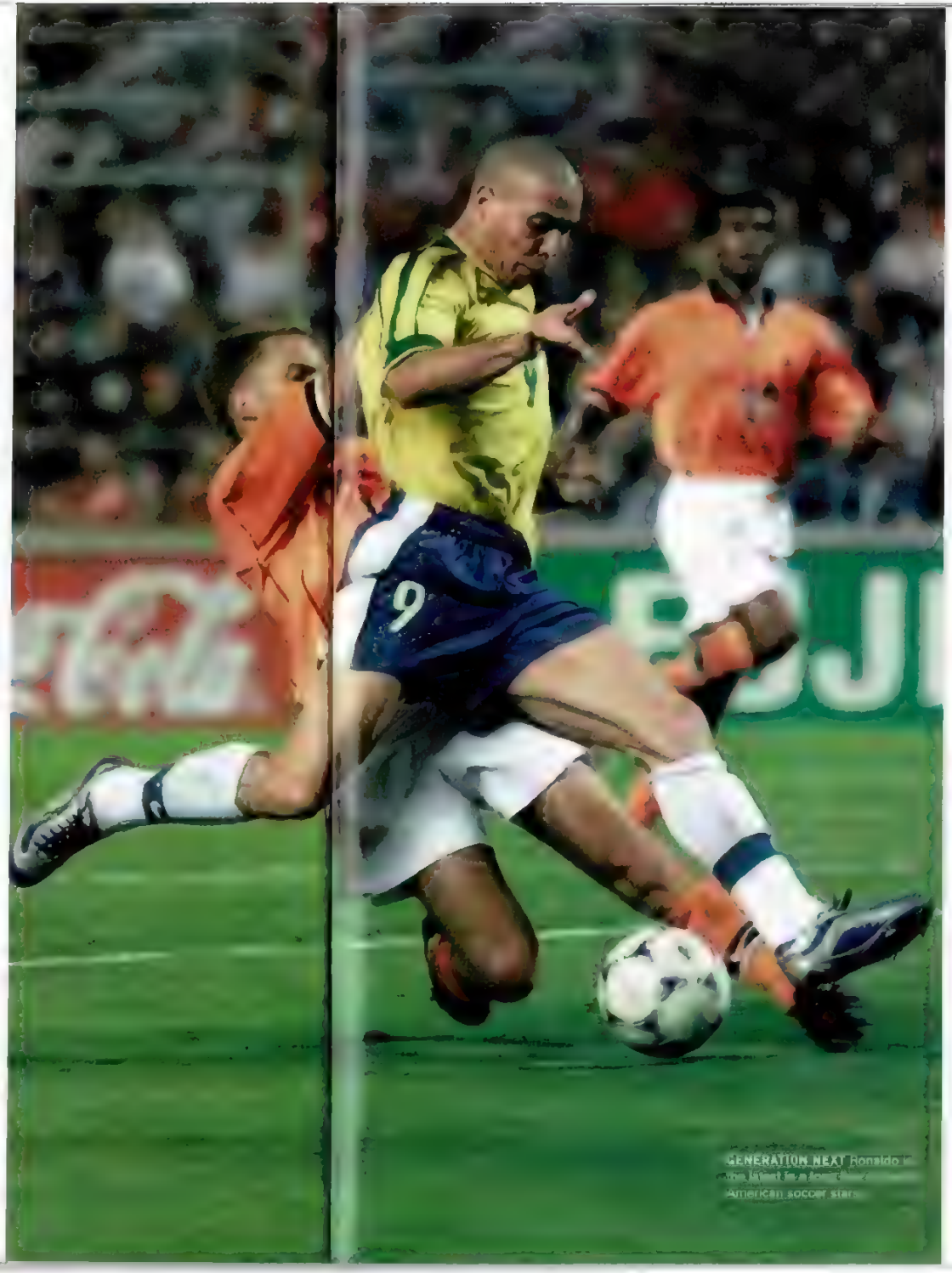
The stadiums are teeming with real fans. Unlike the increasingly corporatised nature of European soccer, South American crowds are a turbulent sea of emotion and noise.

I wonder how the English gentlemen who founded so many South American soccer clubs, like Brazil's famous Corinthians, would feel if they could see what they had started. A century after the first soccer ball was kicked in earnest, South America is the continent that dominates the world game.

Consider that the nine South American soccer nations (with apologies to Venezuela and its fixation with North American sports) have won half of the 16 World Cups played — Uruguay in 1930 and 1950, Argentina in 1978 and 1986 and Brazil in 1958, 1962, 1970 and 1994.

In addition, South American clubs hold a clear advantage over Europe's elite in the Toyota Cup world club championship. The margin is 21 wins to 17, but the South Americans have won only once in the past six years.

A key contributing factor in the European clubs' resurgence is their wholesale recruitment of South America's best players. Aside from winning the most important tournaments, South America has clearly produced the best players we've ever seen.



GENERATION NEXT Ronaldo is one of many South American soccer stars.

The top three in FIFA's player of the century award were Pele (Brazil), Maradona and di Stefano (both Argentina). You can argue about which one was the greatest, but what's beyond dispute is that South America has given birth to the most skilful and influential artists of the world game.

Why is it so? To me, it comes back to the passion for soccer that beats in the hearts of millions.

In 20 visits to the South American continent, I've never ceased to be amazed by how people live and breathe soccer in a way Australians would find hard to understand.

There's a general misconception that South America is somehow the land of manana. Well, that's right. South Americans will always put off the mundane until tomorrow — they're always too busy living for the moment.

The same fire can be found in the philosophy of South American soccer.

I wonder how much ancient Mayans contributed to the soul of South America. They had a ritual known as Tlachtlic, from which the modern game of soccer can trace some of its roots. This ball game had religious significance, and often ended with a human sacrifice. It was not the losers, by the way, but the winners who had earned the "privilege" of offering themselves to the gods.

Maybe that helps explain why South American soccer fans are the most fanatical followers of the world game.

Of course, fans the world over want to see their team winning, but South American fans are different. They'd say winning is everything, but just as important is how you win.

I was first confronted by this different way of thinking with my St George team in 1963. The club had broken with convention and signed four Argentine players, among them Victor Fernandez, who would become a life-long friend and an influential coach of Australia's youth teams.

I was brought up with the European soccer virtues of athleticism and competitiveness. The main attitude dictated that a win was all that mattered, not how you achieved it.

Fernandez and his amigos had a different attitude. The South American philosophy says that soccer is about self-expression. It's an art form and an obsession, not some workman-like pursuit of points on a league table.

Victor wanted to show the opposition and the crowd what he could do. It was never just a game to win, but a chance to display his skill. He would put his technique and ability on the line, giving the crowd something to remember.

Even at training the heat was on. Not for Fernandez a methodical adherence to the coach's demands. A shooting drill would become a fiesta of wonderful soccer, with the ball bending all over the place.

CONTROL At times it seems Rivaldo has the ball on a string.

The coach's mantra to "keep it simple" was no match for the South American flair, nor should it be. When the feeling comes from the heart and finds its way into every sinew of the body, who can stop it?

It was a revelation to me and changed my thinking overnight. I lament that I missed out on the South American influence in my younger years. I now think that if all Australian youngsters had this attitude at five years of age how much better we'd be as a soccer nation.

Our naturally combative, athletic qualities mean Australia produces wonderful soccer players, but what is needed is more emphasis on pure skill. That's why I've long advocated futsal and beach soccer. These two variants of soccer teach South American youngsters the intricate skills, the improvisation and sheer trickery that makes their soccer so special.

By encouraging our youngsters to play these games, we can bring South American skill and flair to our players.

Instilling the passion may be more difficult. Australia is such a lucky country when compared to the many economically struggling nations of South America, but in some ways the poverty is what makes their attitude to soccer so different.

I'll never forget the sight of a beggar on the streets of Rio. He was dishevelled and starving as he lay in the gutter, but he wore his Flamengo shirt as a proud symbol.

Beside him, his scrawny dog was likewise adorned in the red and black of Brazil's most popular club. The beggar's life were wretched, but soccer gave him something to keep going.

Sadly, many a South American soccer story starts in the gutter.

The classic example is Garrincha, the superb winger of Brazil's 1958 and 1962 World Cup triumphs. He was literally born in the gutter, but soccer was his way to escape from poverty and hardship. Garrincha was idolised by a nation, but tragically died where he was born.

The South American philosophy can be seen mostly clearly in Brazil's "jogo bonito", or "beautiful game". At the core of this ideal is a belief that winning should come from being better at the beautiful things — dribbling, passing and shooting.

When Brazilian teams start winning because they're good at the chores of the game – tackling, marking and tactical defending – the hoots of derision are never far away.

I vividly remember a media conference at the 1994 World Cup finals. Brazil's coach Carlos Alberto Parreira was hammered by a hostile Brazilian media. "When are we going to start playing?" they demanded.

Parreira protested that his team was unbeaten after four games and had secured

RARIFIED AIR Marcelo Salas shows the form that's made him a constant goal scorer.
LEADING MAN Paraguay's captain Jose Luis Chilavert makes a save against Australia

Sheilas, wogs & poofters
Johnny Warren
with Andy Harper & Josh Whittington
A goal by goal account of soccer and Australia's social development as a nation from one of the most respected names in the sport...
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a place in the quarter-finals, but the 170 million fans in Brazil feared their team had fallen into pragmatic, European ways.

Parreira's Brazil wasn't playing jogo bonito and the media reflected the fans displeasure. The criticism continued even when Brazil won the World Cup final at Pasadena. Brazil winning in a penalty shoot-out after a scoreless draw? The celebrations were tinged with regret.

That's why the urchin who juggled a tatty old ball in the barrios of Buenos Aires became the crown prince of the soccer world.

In Europe, Diego Maradona is unfairly viewed as a fallen hero, but in South America millions still idolise el Pibe de Oro. Like Pele's winning teams in 1958, '62 and '70, Maradona didn't only win the World Cup, he won it with skill, style and panache. In South America, that is what really matters. ⊛

FANATICAL South American soccer fans produce a unique atmosphere.

IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE

In 1993, Australia had to beat Argentina to make the World Cup finals. Former Socceroo captain PAUL WADE looks back on a tough tie that was decided by a moment of Maradona magic

TOUGH STUFF Paul Wade challenges Diego Maradona during the return leg in Buenos Aires.

WHEN GIVING IT YOUR BEST SHOT ain't good enough — that was the World Cup qualifier between Australia and Argentina in 1993. That point was driven home by then coach Frank Arok shortly after the two games with the comment "But you didn't win ...". Those words still ring in my ears.

Before the game there had been a media frenzy surrounding Diego Maradona, arguably the best soccer player ever. Every newspaper, radio and television outlet covered what Argentina, and Maradona in particular, had done on that day. There was even a story on him training without his boots done up. This was a game that 400 million viewers around the world gave us no chance of winning, adding to the underdog image that we Aussies love.

Maybe that's why, come game time at the Sydney Football Stadium, the national anthem was sung with such gusto and pride. My job for the 90 minutes was to stop Maradona. Assistant coach Raul Blanco's comment summed it all up: "If he goes to the toilet, you go with him." Thanktully, he didn't.

Graham Arnold and Robbie Slater led the charge, backed up by Ned Zelic, Aurelio Vidmar and company.

The Argentineans were so shell-shocked that Maradona had to keep calling for them to slow the game down. I know because I was standing next to him for 90 minutes. Except for a second when he lost me, then I won it back, then he won it from somebody else and in the blink of an eye sent in an ordinary cross for Abel Balbo. Balbo made the cross a great one by heading a freak goal a centimetre inside the post. Mark Bosnich came within a hair's width of saving it.

Our reply was a moment I'll remember forever.

Tony Vidmar's cross and his brother, Aurelio's, tap in. We felt as though we had just witnessed the greatest moment in Australian soccer. Strangers were hugging and kissing each other and crying. The noise was deafening.

The game went on. We huffed and we puffed, but we couldn't blow their house down. It ended with a 1-1 draw against one of soccer's powerhouses. The second match ended in a 1-0 loss, due to an own goal by an unfortunate Alex Tobin.

I thought we had performed very well and had stirred the emotions of Australia. We hadn't been that far away from being in the World Cup finals for only the second time.

Then Frank hit me with that reality check — "But you didn't win."

Let's hope that after another qualifier against a South American team we aren't saying those words again. ⊛

HAIR
CARLOS VALDERRAMA (Colombia)

South Americans have a reputation for being among the most colourful footballers in the world and have produced some stunning hair styles. But greatest of all was Valderrama's blond, exploding mattress look. He was also a brilliant midfield general, earned 111 caps and captained Colombia in three World Cups.

MOUTH
JOSE LUIS CHILAVERT (Paraguay)

Remarkable goalkeeper who loves to join the attack for free kicks, regularly takes penalties and likes nothing better than mouthing off at opponents — particularly Argentinians, as he plays club football there. Had plenty to say when the Socceroos played Paraguay last year and claims to be the world's best goalkeeper. Probably isn't, but still great value.

TORSO
RIVALDO (Brazil)

Big and strong, Rivaldo is the only current Brazilian international worthy of inclusion in a composite "perfect" South American, though Roberto Carlos runs close and only nagging injuries keep Ronaldo out. World player of the year in 1999, Rivaldo has marvellous balance, power in both feet and is good in the air.

HANDS
DIEGO MARADONA (Argentina)

Like Pele, Maradona could fit into any category, but his "Hand of God" goal against England in the 1986 World Cup will unfortunately be remembered as much as his superb ball control and finishing. Earned 91 caps and scored 34 goals for Argentina and is generally regarded among the greatest players ever, despite later drug scandals.

HEAD
SOCRATES (Brazil)

One of world football's great thinkers, the appropriately-named Socrates was the captain and elegant midfield playmaker in the great Brazilian World Cup team of 1982. The bearded former medical student, nicknamed "the Doctor", scored 22 goals in 60 internationals, the pick coming after a superb weaving run against the Soviet Union in the 1982 finals.

HEART
IVAN ZAMORANO (Chile)

Don't ever suppose the South Americans lack "ticker". Chilean national hero Zamorano, a prolific scorer for both club and country, was renowned for his never-say-die attitude. A long and distinguished career took "Ivan the Terrible" from his native land to star with Real Madrid in Spain and Italy's Inter Milan.

ARMS
DANIEL PASSARELLA (Argentina)

Tough-tackling hard man of the Argentina defence during the late 1970s and one of the most commanding sweepers in international history. Used those arms to direct a brilliant Argentine midfield and to hold the World Cup aloft in 1978 as national captain at the age of 25. Still holds record in Italy for goals scored by a defender.

HIPS
ZICO (Brazil)

One swivel of Zico's hips and his marker was floundering. Master of the body swerve and change of pace, Zico allied close control to a stunning shot he was prepared to unleash from any range. His 48 goals from 71 internationals is testament to his scoring power. Named South American player of the year in 1977, '81 and '82.

WALLET
ALFREDO DI STEFANO (Argentina)

The first world football superstar, di Stefano started his career with River Plate in the late 1940s and during a glittering career moved to Millionarios in Colombia and then on to Real Madrid in Spain where he played in five European Cup-winning teams. "The ball gave me prestige, gave me fame, gave me riches," he once said.

LEGS
GABRIEL BATISTUTA (Argentina)

No current South American star's legs carry a more potent threat than the lethal striker known as "Batigol". Out of favour for a long time with the national team, Batistuta returned in the lead-up to the 1998 World Cup and has been a fixture ever since. His country's all-time top marksman, Batistuta currently stars for Italian champion AS Roma.

RIGHT FOOT
PELE (Brazil)

Simply the greatest player the game has seen. Burst on to the international scene as a 17-year-old in the 1958 World Cup, which Brazil won, and played until 1971. Lightning fast with great skills, it was as a finisher that he excelled. Scored 77 goals in 92 appearances for the national team. The only player to have won three World Cups.

LEFT FOOT
ROBERTO RIVELINO (Brazil)

Faces tough competition for left-foot spot, notably from compatriot Roberto Carlos, but Rivelino was the master. Perfected the "banana" free kick pioneered by fellow Brazilian Garrincha and this, with close control, ferocious long-range shooting and a love of sporting theatre, made him a star in the World Cup-winning 1970 side.

SENOR SUPERMAN

South America has produced three of the greatest footballers the world has ever seen. Pele, di Stefano and Maradona could do it all. But the perfect senor? That's a different ball game

by Kit Galer

FIELD OF DREAMS

FRED VILLIERS has been a sports journalist for 60 years. He was Mr Soccer on Channel Seven's World of Sport for 25 years and is determined to see his beloved Socceroos make the World Cup finals once again, as they did in 1974

THE 1974 WORLD CUP FINALS IN Germany may seem a distant memory for many soccer fans around the world, but for three of the Australian team involved in that world baptism, it still brings back sadness and joy. How the Socceroos managed to perform so well at the highest level 27 years ago may be a mystery to many, but coach Rale Rasic believes he has the answer.

Rasic was born in Mostar, Yugoslavia, and joined Footscray JUST in 1962. He helped the club win the State League and Dockerty Cup before retiring as a player in 1966. He was appointed national coach in 1970, and set about qualifying for the finals.

The reason Australia succeeded in making the World Cup finals for the first time in 1974, according to Rasic, was the dramatic transformation from the so-called amateur players to semi-professionals.

None of the players then were attached to overseas clubs and Rasic had just returned from Europe with new coaching ideas. He immediately transformed the players from amateurs into professionals and it paid dividends. Instead of training three times a week, Rasic had his players training three times a day.

"The major secret of our success was the terrific team I had off the field as well as on the field," Rasic says referring to the number of interstate coaches who supported him at the time. "My appointment was on August 15, 1970, and I took the team in the following November-December to Asia, Europe and South America.

"The other secret of our success was having the team together for four years," he says.

In those days there were no problems in getting Australian players from overseas clubs because there were none playing overseas.

Rasic believes we have a good chance of reaching next year's finals in Japan and Korea.

"I think we have some great players but great players do not make great teams. Great people do," he says. "Great characters. Great people with commitment. Great players like Peter Wilson, Ray Richards and Manfred Schaefer. They make great teams.

"I think we can succeed this time, but it depends on the ability of the players to cope with 100,000 people home or away and the capacity of the coach — how shrewd he is in this situation.

"Not to get carried away with anything but 180 minutes of football. Every minute represents a day and every match represents a lifetime."

Rasic believes it is much easier to qualify for the finals now than in the 1970s. Israel

(OPPOSITE) MAN IN CHARGE Rale Rasic addresses the players at West Berlin's Olympic Stadium.

Factfile

Once in a lifetime?

The Socceroos' first attempt at the finals in 1966 was a disaster when they were overwhelmed by the highly-skilled North Koreans. The second attempt, four years later in 1970, proved Australia had learned from its experience in Korea, when it won the tournament in Seoul and Rhodesia but failed at the last hurdle against Israel.

In the third attempt in 1974, the Socceroos were successful after winning the tournament in Sydney against New Zealand, Iraq and Indonesia. A one-point margin over Iraq was enough to put the Socceroos against Iran, winner of the second sub-group.

The qualifying games against Iran were also close battles. The Socceroos started well in Sydney winning 3-0, but it was a different story in Tehran. Iraq led 2-0 after 31 minutes then Australia was forced to defend for the rest of the game to achieve a 3-2 aggregate.

It was not over. To qualify, Australia had to beat South Korea, who proved a hard nut to crack when they missed many clear chances during a 0-0 draw in Sydney. In the return match in Seoul two weeks later, the Koreans led 2-0 before the Socceroos hit back to force a 2-2 draw.

The playoff was in neutral Hong Kong, where Jimmy Mackay of Victoria, netted the solitary goal with a fabulous volley. It was a great moment for Rasic and his assistant Les Scheinflug who had both enjoyed distinguished playing careers in Australia.

However, Rasic and Scheinflug's plans received a setback in the final warm-up against Uruguay in Sydney, when Socceroo striker Ray Baartz was put out of the game by a career-ending karate chop from Uruguayan defender Louis Garisto.

The Socceroos had no luck in the finals' draw, ending up in a strong group against favourite West Germany, East Germany and Chile. They had to play both West and East Germany in Hamburg and Chile in Berlin.

Rasic produced a well-organised defence which held out for an hour against East Germany before the first goal, but the Socceroos eventually went down 2-0. Against West Germany four days later, the Germans proved too strong, scoring first after 12 minutes, the second in the 35th minute and the third in the 53rd.

In the final game against Chile, torrential rain marred the match which finished 0-0. The Australians also had to struggle with 10 men after Ray Richards was sent off. Despite the setback, the Socceroos held on to win their first and only point in the World Cup finals.

The 1974 Socceroo Squad

GOALKEEPERS
Jack Reilly
Jim Mi[illegible]savljevic
Allan Maher

DEFENDERS
Col Curran
Ivo Rudic
Manfred Schaefer
Doug Utjesenovic
John Watkiss
Peter Wilson (captain)
Harry Williams

MIDFIELDERS
Jim Mackay
Dave Harding
Ray Richards
Jim Rooney
John Warren

STRIKERS
Adrian Alston
Atti Abonyi
Branko Buljevic
Ernie Campbell
Garry Manuel
Peter Ollerton
Max Tolson

was a hard country to beat and they are still causing problems in elimination rounds today, he says

"Israel is a great team. It was in our group as well as all Asia so you had to be champion of Asia to qualify in those days."

And Rasic's advice to our Socceroos today is: "Never ever stop playing until the final whistle blows. You cannot play for goals. You play for result."

Striker Peter Ollerton was the youngest player in Australia's 1974 World Cup campaign. He played against West Germany and Chile and is disappointed that FIFA has made it so difficult for Australia to qualify for the finals again

"FIFA still have not been able to accept that Australia should go through the Oceania/Asia group of countries to win an automatic place in the finals," he says. "For us to be involved in this side of the world and to play a country completely on the other side of the world to qualify for the World Cup doesn't make sense."

Ollerton, who won last year's Victorian Coach of the Year award, played his first international in a final warm-up at Sydney Cricket Ground when he scored in the 2-0 defeat of Uruguay.

"I remember every minute of that game Ray Baartz scored the first goal and I scored the second," says the striker who was 23 at the time. "That goal basically sealed my spot in the Australian team."

Michael Weinstein, a foundation member of the Australian Soccer Federation, who accompanied the Socceroos in their World Cup quest in 1974, says Australia now has a much more difficult passage in qualifying for the finals than we did then

"At that time (in 1974) we had to go to a few countries to play and we finished in Hong Kong, beating South Korea 1–0 when Jim Mackay scored the winning goal," he says. "The players that went to Germany in our last finals didn't get paid a penny. They were only paid loss of wages."

Weinstein says it is too easy for Australia to qualify if it only has to play countries in Oceania

"To win Oceania is not a big deal," he says. "This in itself does not give us any preparation From every group only two teams qualify for the finals, and when you see strong countries which are not participating it makes you wonder.

"If you play in a group like Germany, England and say Yugoslavia, this is a difficult passage Look at the countries which qualified in Europe and the ones which didn't qualify. You will see there are a lot of countries much stronger and better than we are." ⊛

TOUGH TACKLE John Watkiss in action against Greece
SLOTS IT Johnny Warren shoots for goal against South Korea during the campaign.

HERO'S WELCOME The Socceroos at the airport after beating South Korea.

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POT OF GOLD

Qualifying for the World Cup will mean more than just respect on the pitch — it will also provide a financial windfall

BY DAVID LEWIS

AUSTRALIAN SOCCER COULD GET ITS hands on a $40 million bounty if Frank Farina's Socceroos qualify for the World Cup. That's the prize at stake over the next seven days for a code desperate to move from the poorhouse to the penthouse.

Soccer Australia – buckling under a $3m debt – will receive a windfall of $12m from FIFA just for qualifying. A further $6m will come Australia's way if the Socceroos progress beyond the first stage of the competition.

Socceroo players – recently paid $1m in overdue wages and bonuses by the game's impoverished governing body – will pocket 40 per cent of FIFA's handout, an unprecedented payday for Australia's already cashed-up overseas-based elite.

That's just the first drop of a cash cascade.

A further $10m could be generated from prestigious World Cup warm-up matches against the likes of England or Argentina during the lead-up to June's tournament. The games could be staged at either the MCG – a proven cash cow for soccer – or Stadium Australia in front of near-capacity audiences.

Then there's a gallery of corporate icons waiting to have their names associated with the first Australian team in 28 years "to qualify for the planet's most widely-watched sporting spectacular. That alone could bring in an estimated $8m.

The doors to the previously uncharted world of highstakes marketing and merchandising would also beunbolted.

It's a landscape already exploited brilliantly by the AFL – which grosses over $100m each year – and it could offer soccer an infusion of up to $10m from the sale of paraphernalia.

Leo Karis, Paul Okon's agent, believes the journey from penny lane to the Ritz could be swift.

"If Australia qualified it would be a massive opportunity for the game to cash in," he says. "The sponsorship revenue alone could be huge. For example you could have Kellogg's as the Socceroos' official cereal provider. Ford might supply the transport needs for the Socceroos and perhaps Westpac could be their official bank.

"The Wallabies have already embraced the concept with Vodafone and Bundy Rum, there's no reason why soccer couldn't follow suit.

"The merchandising potential is also huge from the sale of official soccer balls, coffee mugs, kit and associated memorabilia. A serious strategy needs to be put in place to make the most of the opportunities ahead," Karis believes.

Bernie Mandic, who manages a bevy of Australian stars including marquee act Harry Kewell, believes qualification would provide a "priceless" shift in the public's perception of soccer. "Soccer Australia would be in a position to attract a platinum sponsor with a second tier of gold sponsors also on board," he says.

"They would be in a position to plan for the long-term, rather than accept the short-sighted deals that have been the norm until now," he says.

THERE'S A GALLERY OF CORPORATE ICONS WAITING TO HAVE THEIR NAMES ASSOCIATED WITH THE FIRST AUSTRALIAN TEAM IN 28 YEARS TO QUALIFY FOR THE PLANET'S MOST WIDELY-WATCHED SPORTING SPECTACULAR

LONG WAY TO THE TOP

Australian soccer players are having a big impact in Europe despite the huge distances and cultural changes they have to overcome BY SONJA VIDUKA

When Business Review Weekly published a list of Australia's 50 richest sports men and women at the end of 2000, more than one fifth of the athletes on that list were Australian soccer players plying their trade overseas. It seems barely a week goes by without an Australian soccer player making headlines around the world for his achievements on the soccer pitch. Where ten years ago the thought of an Australian soccer player starring in an overseas club would have induced a snigger from many European managers, those same managers are now raving about the abilities of their Aussie imports.

Europe's biggest clubs are taking notice. They hold Australian players in such high regard that they are putting their money where their mouths are, their millions into Australian soccer. Clubs such as Scottish giant Glasgow Rangers, which recently bought into Sydney club Northern Spirit, are forming feeder partnerships with Australian teams to get first access to young local talent.

All are hoping to find another Kewell, Okon, Viduka or Moore and snap them up before their price tags reach the astronomical figures that soccer stars now command.

While the Australian domestic competition has yet to reach its full potential, Australian soccer's individual stars have never shone so brightly. There are currently over 140 Australian soccer players in overseas leagues, many in the best competitions in the world. Australian soccer exports regularly play in the English Premier League, the German Bundesliga, the Dutch first division and the Scottish Premier League. There are also Australian players in the Greek, Belgian, Norwegian, Swedish, Swiss, Croatian, Austrian and Japanese leagues.

Inspired by the success of their predecessors, and lured by the big money contracts and stardom offered by European clubs, Australian soccer players are leaving our shores at younger and younger ages.

These young Australians face unique challenges. While their foreign teammates may be only a few hours from the comfort of home, Australians must move half a world away, often having to learn a new language and a new culture.

Australians trying to break into European clubs often face the additional obstacle of getting through the red tape to obtain a work permit. They are also confronted by foreign player quotas, which can provoke fierce competition among the players. Finally, they must fit into their new team and impress the manager on the pitch.

At age 26, Australian striker Paul Agostino has already overcome many of the obstacles to become one of the most prolific scorers in the German Bundesliga. Leaving Australia at 16 in 1992 to play for Swiss team Young Boys, Agostino has since played for Yverden in Switzerland, and Bristol City in England before moving to his current club, TSV 1860 Munich, five years ago.

Although he dreamed of playing soccer in Europe since he was a boy, and had a successful season in the National Soccer League for the Adelaide Sharks, Agostino was still unprepared for life as an Australian soccer player in Europe.

"It's a lot more sacrifice than I thought it

FAN FAVOURITE Manchester City's fans voted Danny Tiatto the team's player of the year last season.

was going to be and, speaking from my experience, there are a lot more tough and hard times than good times," he says.

Leaving at such a young age also meant that Agostino was unable to do a lot of things his peers were doing. "You have to give up the going out and messing around with your friends, you've got to stay in and put in the hard work on the training ground. You can't go out drinking as an 18-year-old every night in the clubs - you've got to be disciplined and put in the hard work to make the last cut."

Agostino says that for him the initial period in Europe was the most difficult. "You firstly go to a new team and try to impress and at the same time try to learn their language, learn their culture - you don't know exactly what they're saying, whether they're talking to you or about you, the initial process is very tough but after that it's easier."

There was a period when he was ready to give up. "The most difficult stage was the first three years I had in Switzerland. I was unhappy, the football side of things wasn't going well, I wasn't enjoying my football, I was missing home a lot and I was only 19 years old. I just thought it wasn't all worth it and I came very close to packing it all in, but at the last minute I decided to give England a try and then things started to turn around."

Still, Agostino has no regrets about his decision to pursue professional football. "In the end you can look back and say it's very good - it's tough but it made me tough at the same time. I had to learn how to live on my own, to look after myself, cook and clean for myself. I had to learn a new language - firstly Swiss/German and then German. It's good for you in the end - it makes you a stronger person and a stronger player."

Agostino feels the extra difficulties that Australian soccer players face may be precisely the reason they are so successful and in such demand by overseas clubs.

"The European guys don't have to go through the same thing. They're only a couple of hours away from home. Maybe the attitude and mentality of the Australian players is something they don't have in Europe. The Aussies are very aggressive and the will to win is always there."

Socceroo's coach Frank Farina also believes that the Australian players unique perspective has contributed to their success in various foreign leagues.

"Australian players have a different attitude from the Europeans because they come from such a different lifestyle and upbringing. They didn't grow up with the same things that a lot of the European players grew up with, such as the big clubs and superstars, so they don't take these things for granted. That's probably why they have such a strong will to succeed and are doing so well," says Farina.

Although much is made of the huge salaries and lavish lifestyles of our top footballers, Farina believes that money is not the main motivation for any of the Australian players. "I think the main thing for the Australians is the challenge and the desire to compete with the best players in the world and play football at the highest level. I don't think the focus is on money. It's the desire to play at the highest level of the competition, playing the Manchester United and the Leeds United and in the Australian national team."

Socceroo and Wolverhampton Wanderer's defender Kevin Muscat left Australia in 1996 with the aim of making it in the English competition. Having dreamed of playing in England since he first started kicking a soccer ball around at age 10, he knew he couldn't knock back the opportunity to play in Europe when it came along.

"It's just the fact that you're going to improve yourself as a player, because the Australian league, without any disrespect, wasn't professional when I left and there is no denying that financially you can do a lot better for yourself and your family as well. It's a world apart in that respect."

Muscat, now 28, is a natural leader and extrovert, and captained the Olyroos at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. He says the competitiveness of English football took his mind off any initial feelings of homesickness and allowed him to settle into his new environment quickly. "There are so many games and you're away from home, travelling all the time so that really takes your mind off things and I settled in relatively easily," he says.

He has also been able to cope with the ups and downs and the immense media exposure that is part and parcel of life as a professional footballer in Europe. "You are affected in ways, but it's just a matter of putting things right when they're not. I have always maintained that I only have to satisfy one person and that is the manager. I've played regularly at both clubs I have been to so I can honestly say I have done that and that's good enough for me."

The success of Australian footballers in foreign leagues has done wonders for Australia's national team. The popularity of the world game means that these young men have become some of Australia's most well known ambassadors. As Australia attempts to qualify for its first World Cup in 28 years, one must remember the remarkable odds each individual player has overcome and the sacrifices they have made just to be there.

HIGH FLYER Paul Agostino has often found the back of the net for TSV 1860 Munich.

AUSTRALIANS PLAYING OVERSEAS

Austria
Frank Bazzano - SW Bregenz
Eddie Bosnar - Sturm Graz

Belgium
Joe Didulica - Germinal Beershot Antwerp
Lorenz Kindtner - Roeselare
Rodrigo Palomino - Francs Borains
Josip Skoko - Racing Genk
Archie Thompson - Lierse

Czech Republic
Mike Sarynes - SFC Opava

Chile
Marcelo Pena - Everton

Croatia
Kresimir Basic - Hrvatski Dragovoljac
Tony Grdic - Hajduk Split
Anthony Maslic - NK Sibenik

Denmark
Sasho Petrovski - Viborg FF
Richard Piesa - Aarhus GF

England
Daniel Allsopp - Notts County
Con Blatsis - Derby County
Jason van Blerk - Stockport County
Jon Brady - Rushden & Diamonds
Dimitri Brimas - Bournemouth
Stazi Brimas - Bournemouth
Darren Broxton- Southampton
Mark Bosnich - Chelsea
Jacob Burns - Leeds United
Adrian Caceras - Brentford
Shane Cansdell-Sherriff - Leeds United
David Carney - Everton
Simon Colosimo - Manchester City
Sean Cooney - Coventry City
Chris Coyne - Luton Town
Clint Davies - Birmingham City
Gareth Edds - Nottingham Forest
Michael Ferrante - West Ham United
Richard Garcia - West Ham United
Lee Gilman - Norwich City
Mark Graham - Southampton
Scott Guyett - Oxford United
John Filan - Blackburn Rovers
Hayden Foxe - West Ham United
Lee Howells - Cheltenham Town
Danny Invincible - Swindon Town
Richard Johnson - Watford
Brad Jones - Middlesbrough
Harry Kewell - Leeds United
Shaun Kilkelly - Sheffield Wednesday
Steve Laurie - West Ham United
Stan Lazaridis - Birmingham City
Jay Lucas - Southampton
Scott MacDonald - Southampton
Trent McClenahan - West Ham United
Danny Milosevic - Leeds United
Shaun Murphy - Sheffield United
Kevin Muscat - Wolverhampton Wanderers
Lucas Neil - Blackburn Rovers
Paul Okon - Middlesbrough
David Oldfield - Peterborough United
Andy Peterson - Portsmouth
Tony Popovic - Crystal Palace
Blake Restell - Doncaster Rovers
Jordan Rhodes - Charlton Athletic
James Rodden - Leyton Orient
Matthew Rosier - Southampton
Mark Schwarzer - Middlesbrough
Chris Sharpe - Southampton
Danny Tiatto - Manchester City
Mark Viduka - Leeds United
Russell Waller - Darlington
Luke Wilkshire - Middlesborough

France
Mile Sterjovski - Lille

Germany
Paul Agostino - 1860 Munich
Joey Di Iono - Werder Bremen
Frank Junc - Bayer Leverkusen
Joshua Kennedy - VFL Wolfsburg
Goran Lozanovski - Alemmanie Aachen
Mark Rudan - Alemmania Aachen
Tony Sekulic - VFR Mannheim
Josip Simunic - Hertha Berlin
David Willey - FC Creglingen
David Zdrilic - SpVgg Unterhaching
Ned Zelic - 1860 Munich

Greece
Ante Covic - POAK Salonika
Bill Damonos - Kallithea
Kosta Salapsidis - Kallithea
John Tambouris - Kalamata
Kynakos Tohouroglou - PAOK Salonika
Michael Valkanis - Larissa

Italy
Ross Aloisi - Alzano
Marco Bresciano - Empoli
Vince Grella - Empoli
Adnan Madasch - Atalanta
Mitrovic - AC Perugia
Nello Notto - Torino Calcio SPA
Nick Rizzo - Ternana
Daniel Severino - Piacenza
Jess Vanstrattan - Juventus

Japan
Steve Corica - Sanfreece Hiroshima

Malta
Matthew Galea - Hamrun Spartans FC
Peter Pullicino - Hibernians FC

Netherlands
Jason Culina - Ajax Amsterdam
Brett Emerton - Feyenoord Rotterdam
Zeljko Kalac - Roda JC Kerkrade
Mark Tsorlas - FC Utrect
Peter Zois - NAC Breda

Norway
Chad Gibson - Bodo/Glimt
Arne Junc - Molde
Steve Laybutt - Lyn
Anthony Magnacca - SK Brann
Kasey Wehrman - Moss
Clayton Zane - Lillestrom

Portugal
Michael Curcija - Sporting Braga

Romania
Joshua Maguire - Steaua Bucharest

Scotland
Ben Honeyman - Brechin
Stuart Lovell - Livingston
Simon Miotto - Raith Rovers
Craig Moore - Glasgow Rangers
Mark Robertson - Dundee
Chris Sweeney - Queen's Park
Tony Vidmar - Glasgow Rangers
Stuart Webster - Greenock Morton
Sean Widera - Hibernian

Singapore
Adam Anderson - Woodlands Wellington
Brian Bothwell - Geylang United
Vlado Bozinovski - Clementi Khalsa
Tony Carbone - Marine Castle United
Alex Duric - Geylang United
Josip Kozic - Balestier Central
Hrvoje Matkovic - Home United
Darren Stewart - Balestier Central
Ernie Tapai - Clementi Khalsa
Hamilton Thorp - Tanjong Pagar United
Nebojsa Vukosavljevic - Geylang United
Vlado Zoric - Home United

Spain
John Aloisi - Athletic Osasuna
Hose, Belloserans - Racing Club de Ferrol
Cameron Pino - Seville

Sweden
Luke Casserley - AIK Solna
Chay Hews - I F Sylvia

Switzerland
Scott Chipperfield - FC Basel

stats

WORLD CUP HISTORY

Year	Winner	Leading scorer
1930	Uruguay	Guillermo Stábile (ARG) 8
1934	Uruguay	Oldrich Nejedly (CZE) 5
1938	Italy	Leonidas (BRA) 8
1950	Uruguay	Ademir (BRA) 8
1954	West Germany	Sandor Kocsis (HUN) 11
1958	Brazil	Juste Fontaine 13
1962	Brazil	Garrincha (BRA) 4 Valentin Ivanov (SOV) Leonel Sanchez (CHI) Florian Albert (HUN) Vava (BRA) Drazan Jerkovic (YUG)
1966	England	Eusebio (POR) 9
1970	Brazil	Gerd Müller (GER) 10
1974	West Germany	Grzegorz Lato (POL) 7
1978	Argentina	Mario Kempes (ARG) 6
1982	Italy	Paolo Rossi (ITA) 6
1986	Argentina	Gary Lineker (ENG) 6
1990	West Germany	Salvatore Schillaci (ITA) 6
1994	Brazil	Hristo Stoitchkov (BUL) 6 Oleg Salenko (RUS)
1998	France	Davor Suker (CRO) 6

BIGGEST VICTORY

1982 - Hungary vs El Salvador 10-1
1954 - Hungary vs South Korea 9-0
1974 - Yugoslavia vs Zaïre 9-0

MOST GOALS IN ONE MATCH

12 Goals - Austria vs Switzerland (1954) 7-5
11 Goals - Brazil vs Poland (1938) 6-5
11 Goals - Hungary vs West Germany (1954) 8-3
11 Goals - Hungary vs El Salvador (1982) 10-1
10 Goals - France vs Paraguay (1958) 7-3

MOST SUCCESSIVE WINS:

7 wins - Italy in 1934-38

MOST SUCCESSIVE DEFEATS:

9 defeats - Mexico 1930 & 1950-1958

MOST SUCCESSIVE DRAWS:

4 draws - Ireland in 1990

MOST GAMES UNDEFEATED:

13 - Brazil 1958 - 1966 (won 11, drew 2)

MOST GAMES WITHOUT A WIN:

16 - Bulgaria 1962 - 1974 & 1986

- The fastest red card was given to the Uruguayan player Sergio Batista after just 56 seconds in their first round match against Scotland in 1986.

- No match in World Cup history has been more distasteful than the West Germany - Austria clash in Spain 1982. Because of the format of the tournament, only a 1-0 win to the Germans meant that both these neighbour countries would proceed to the next round at the expense of Algeria. When West Germany took the lead after 10 minutes, both teams virtually stopped playing. It slowed down to walking pace with neither of the teams interested in going forward. The neutral Spanish crowd and the Algerian fans constantly booed and shouted, a German supporter was so disgusted that he set fire to his national flag on the terraces.

The following day Algeria protested to FIFA that the game had been fixed and called for both teams to be disqualified, but their protest was rejected. From the 1986 World Cup onwards, the last round of matches in the 1st round have been played simultaneously to avoid scandals like that.

GOAL RECORDS

- Fastest goal in a World Cup match was scored by Czechoslovakia's Vaclav Masek after only 16 seconds against Mexico in 1962.

- Latest goal was scored by David Platt of England, in their second round match against Belgium in 1990 after 119 minutes.

- Fastest hat-trick was made by Hungary's Laszlo Kiss against El Salvador in 1982, when he scored after 70, 74 and 77 minutes. He is also the only substitute to have scored a hat-trick.

- Oldest player to have scored a goal is Roger Milla of Cameroon when he scored against Russia in 1994. He was then 42 years and 39 days old.

- Youngest player to have scored a goal is Pelé of Brazil when he scored against Wales in 1958. He was then only 17 years and 239 days old

THE ROAD TO THE WORLD CUP

Every soccer-playing country in the world participates in the World Cup. Each of the six soccer confederations run qualifying rounds to determine their representatives at the World Cup finals, which are held every four years. In 2002, the finals will be held in Japan and Korea.

CONCACAF

The Confederation Of North, Central And Caribbean Association Football supplies three finalists. Costa Rica, the United States and Mexico have qualified. No team from this confederation has emerged as World Cup champion.

Romario kisses the trophy after Brazil won in 1994.

AFC

The Asian Football Confederation will provide two or three finalists, plus the two host countries. The top two teams automatically qualify, with the third best playing off against one of the runners up from UEFA's qualifying phase. No team from the AFC has ever won the World Cup. Teams that have already qualified from the AFC for the 2002 World Cup: Korea Republic, Japan, China and Saudi Arabia.

Brazilian captain Dunga holds the trophy aloft in '94

OFC

The Oceania Football Confederation has no direct qualifiers to the World Cup finals. The winner of the qualifying rounds, this year Australia, plays the fifth best CONMEBOL nation for a place in the finals.

Bobby Moore after England's 1966 win.

CAF

The Confederation Africaine de Football (made up of African nations) provides five teams at the World Cup finals. South Africa, Cameroon, Senegal, Tunisia and Nigeria have qualified for the 2002 World Cup Finals. No team from the CAF has ever held up the World Cup trophy.

UEFA

The Union des Associations Europeennes de Football sends 14 or 15 teams to the World Cup finals. After the group qualifying phase, nine group winners directly qualify. Eight group runners-up play off against each other to qualify, while the ninth runner-up plays the third placed AFC nation. So far, France (as the current World Cup champions), Poland, Sweden, Spain, Russia, Portugal, Denmark, Croatia, Italy, Slovenia, Turkey, Belgium, Germany and England have already qualified.

England, Germany, France and Italy are UEFA nations that have won the World Cup.

Didier Deschamps led France to victory in 1998.

Argentina's Diego Maradona in 1986.

CONMEBOL

Four or five teams will emerge from the Confederacion du Sudamericana Futbol qualifying to reach the finals. After a marathon 88 matches, the top four teams directly qualify, while the fifth placed team plays off against the winner of the Oceania region. Argentina, Paraguay, Ecuador and Brazil have already qualified. Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay are the CONMEBOL nations to have won the World Cup.

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